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Official Records

5th plenary meeting
Monday, 20 September 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Address by Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mkapa: Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. This is an expression of delegations' confidence in and high esteem for your diplomatic skills, and reflects also the distinguished role which your country has played in furthering the goals of this Assembly. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Tanzanian delegation as you guide the deliberations during this session.

I wish also to commend your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for ably presiding over the Assembly at its fifty-third session. I congratulate very specially the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the able and distinguished manner in which he has continued to manage and guide the affairs of our Organization in the face of many daunting challenges.

This last General Assembly session of the century and millennium, provides an opportunity to review the past and draw lessons from it. We must build on the positive, even as we mobilize the individual and collective will to avoid carrying the baggage of poverty, conflict and human rights violations into the next century. The role of the United Nations system must also be re-examined in accordance with the new vision we have for the future.

The twentieth century witnessed tremendous advances in science and technology. But the benefits were not shared widely, let alone equally. Unprecedented economic development and prosperity has been attained, with world consumption topping $24 trillion in 1998, twice the level of 1975 and six times that of 1950. But, on a world scale, the 20 per cent of the world's people in the highest income countries consumed 86 per cent of the world's goods and services, producing a corresponding degree of pollution and environmental damage. And a whole fifth of humanity has been left completely out of this prosperity.

This century has also experienced major international conflicts, particularly the two world wars. The existence of a bipolar system driven by ideological differences, and the resultant arms race that led to the

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abuse of science which was the development of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, exacerbated the security situation in the world. To its credit, the United Nations Organization has laid the foundation and framework for the attainment of peace, security, development and human rights. The United Nations actively supported liberation struggles all over the world, and we are entering the new millennium having accomplished the mission of political decolonization in most countries. Of particular gratification to Africa is the end of apartheid.

We have also witnessed the end of the cold war, even though the peace dividend has yet to reach all corners of the globe and include the innocent victims of the cold war. For, as the African proverb has it, when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.

Africa has unfortunately been left behind in development. Despite the positive macroeconomic achievements in recent years, the average African household today consumes 20 per cent less than it did 25 years ago. Other new, critical challenges facing Africa include conflicts and the urgent need to consolidate the rule of law, human rights and democratic governance.

The United Nations in the coming century will be measured, among other things, by the degree to which these issues, particularly the development dimension, are addressed. The United Nations, by virtue of its global reach, its universal membership and its impartiality, has a vital role to play to ensure there is equity between the response to the challenges facing Africa and those facing other parts of the world.

The United Nations should also continue its role of coordinating the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and regional economic commissions. We reiterate the need for broadening and strengthening the participation of developing countries in international decision-making. Democracy and good governance between nations is as important to humanity as democracy and good governance within nations.

Processes of liberalization and globalization of the world economy have profound implications for Africa and other least developed countries in terms of their position in the world economy, their development prospects, the nature of their economic policies and their impact on economic sovereignty.

The community of nations, at the dawn of a new millennium, should rethink the mechanisms and policies that underpin the functioning of the global economy to create a conducive international environment that ensures the rapid economic development of the least developed countries. We need a system whose pillars are growth, stability and social equity, and which should facilitate the integration of least developed countries into the world economy in a beneficial way.

These countries, particularly those in Africa, remain constrained by weak supply capabilities, which, when compounded by an unfavourable international economic environment, limit their ability to benefit from globalization. The trend of the last few years does not give us much comfort. From 1990 to 1996, African exports of goods grew by only 2 per cent on average.

The long-term objective of our development efforts is to improve production of quality goods and services that can meet local needs and be exported. We see trade as a dynamic force for accelerating growth and development. We are, however, aware of our limitations in producing such products for the international market. Our economies still largely rely on the production of commodities, in respect of which terms of trade continue to worsen. The issue of commodities should thus continue to be central to the international development agenda. In particular, we urge the international community to provide resources and technical assistance to countries that depend on commodities to build the capacity for vertical and horizontal diversification of commodities.

Furthermore, developed countries and funding institutions should increase their support to the Common Fund for Commodities, including fulfilment of their pledges. The United Nations should also reconsider the proposal for the establishment of a special fund to promote commodity diversification in Africa.

We hope that the Seattle ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) will give further impetus to the implementation of measures to assist least developed countries to become integrated into the international trading system in a meaningful way. We call upon the donor community to extend financial and technical assistance towards the implementation of integration frameworks prepared by the least developed countries.

The burden of debt is one of the main obstacles to the achievement of the economic and social development

objectives of African and other least developed countries. These countries devote a high proportion, in some cases exceeding 30 per cent, of government revenue to debt service payment, with the consequent risk of social and political instability. We welcome the various debt relief initiatives undertaken by the donor community. They provide some relief, but more far-reaching measures, including debt forgiveness, need to be taken urgently to have an impact on poverty.

Tanzania welcomes the revisions made to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative at the Cologne summit of the Group of Seven. However, if growth is to be sustained, adequate levels of external funding must complement our economic reform efforts. Nor should debt relief under the HIPC Initiative be a substitute for increased bilateral non-debt-creating aid, and neither should it be financed through reallocation of committed aid.

Tanzania has established a multilateral-debt-relief fund to help it service multilateral debt so as to direct the savings to poverty-reducing activities in the social sector, such as education, health and water services. We have shown that it is possible to link debt relief directly to poverty eradication initiatives in a transparent and accountable manner that involves government, civil society and donor countries. The debt relief we have received through the fund has gone straight to cushioning the social sector budget. I want to thank the Governments of Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, which have contributed to our war on poverty by contributing to our multilateral-debt-relief fund account.

My delegation is deeply disturbed by the drastic decline in official development assistance to less than one third of the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of donor countries. For five years continuously, from 1992 to 1997, aid as a percentage of gross national product in countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) fell, from a combined average of 0.33 per cent to an all-time low of 0.22 per cent. This trend needs to be reversed as a matter of urgency.

But what is needed is aid that increasingly enhances our capacity for ownership of the development agenda and process, and our capacity to be self-developing. We do not want the kind of aid that takes from us the initiative for development in dignity, and increases rather than reduces dependency on aid. Among other things, we need aid that will help us develop an attractive environment for private-sector investment, domestic and foreign.

Technology is a key factor in the development process. The recent great strides in technology present tremendous opportunities for human development. However, this technological revolution has largely bypassed African and other least developed countries. The United Nations, and the international community at large, should facilitate and finance access to and transfer of technology, including new and environmentally sound technologies, for developing countries on favourable, including consessional, or grant terms.

Tanzania is working closely with other countries to find a peaceful resolution to conflicts in the Great Lakes region, particularly in Burundi and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Burundi peace process, under the facilitation of Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, is going well in Arusha. The main sticking point is security arrangements that would instil confidence and trust for all, as well as a democratic process involving all stakeholders. We hope that these problems will be resolved in the coming rounds of talks, so that a peace agreement can be reached as soon as possible. The international community should therefore continue urging full participation by all the key players in the Arusha peace process. All attempts to wreck the negotiations, under any pretext, should be discouraged.

Concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is very encouraging that all the parties involved in the conflict have finally signed the Lusaka ceasefire Agreement. The challenge ahead is to not let the momentum ebb, but to move expeditiously to implement the truce, including sending and empowering Organization of African Unity (OAU) observers and a United Nations peacekeeping force, as envisaged.

Angola continues to experience a fratricidal war waged by rebel UNITA forces against the legal Government of Angola. Clearly, Jonas Savimbi has violated the Lusaka Peace Agreement and has shown contempt for international opinion. It is counterproductive for the United Nations to remove its observer team from Angola, as this would send a negative signal that the international community is abandoning Angola in its hour of need.

The most recent summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), held in Maputo, expressed solidarity with the Government of President

Dos Santos and pledged to give him moral and material support. The international community should likewise be forthright in its support for the Angolan Government and in condemning Jonas Savimbi as the war criminal that he is. Action commensurate with the gravity of his insolence and his human rights abuses should likewise be taken against him.

On Western Sahara, Tanzania is following closely the peace process under the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). We hope that a solution to the crisis will be found through a referendum as provided for in the United-Nations-brokered peace process without any further unnecessary delays.

My delegation commends the truces and negotiated settlements reached in the conflicts in Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Liberia, even as we urge practical commitment to peace and reconciliation in the Ethiopia-Eritrea war.

I wish also to commend and encourage the positive developments unfolding in Middle East. I urge Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Barak to remain committed to the peace process and to move with courage and vision to the next stages that will ensure the durable and shared peace and security that has eluded the Palestinian and Israeli people for so long.

From this podium, I denounce the merchants of war fuelling conflicts on the African continent. Arms dealers should stop supplying weapons to conflict areas. Countries should adhere to the relevant international conventions prohibiting the arms trade, especially between non-state entities. It is immoral and unacceptable that natural resources such as gold, diamonds, oil and timber, which should be exploited to build a better future for African children, are being used instead to buy weapons from rich countries and arms dealers, with which to kill and maim those very children and their parents.

Associated with conflicts in the Great Lakes region is the problem of refugees. Tanzania has received refugees for over 40 years now. As I speak, we still host over 800,000 refugees, some in refugee camps and many others in settlement camps and elsewhere in society. We have always received refugees out of humanitarian concerns in the African way and in fulfilment of our international obligations. We have never turned away those fleeing to save their lives, and we have never negotiated refugee quotas with other countries. Yet even for us, the time comes when we must appeal for more help to give us the capacity to provide succour and refuge to these people. I pay tribute to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Ogata, and her colleagues for the efforts they are making to draw international attention to African refugees and displaced persons.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has done much, but it can only do as much as the international community gives it resources to do. I urge greater support to UNHCR and other relief agencies working in Tanzania, and greater support to my Government.

A lasting solution to the refugee problem, however, lies in resolving the root causes in the refugee-generating countries. This would enable UNHCR to begin the repatriation process, as was done successfully in the case of Rwanda three years ago.

Four years ago, the United Nations established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha. Apart from the Tribunal's early teething problems, the Government of Tanzania lauds its many precedent-setting achievements in the emerging area of international criminal justice. We commend the improvements in the efficiency of the Tribunal's operations and management under its Registrar.

As we pledge to continue fully supporting the Tribunal in accordance with our obligations as the host country, we call upon the United Nations and the entire international community to continue providing all necessary support, including resources and manpower, until the task of prosecuting all culprits in the Rwanda genocide episode is successfully accomplished. A strong and clear message must come out of this Assembly that no war criminal will ever escape the long arm of international law.

Tanzania adds its voice to the denunciation of the violent attempts to thwart the fulfilment of the desire of the people of East Timor to be free and sovereign, clearly and preponderantly expressed in a free and fair referendum. The results of the referendum must be respected and the Timorese people's aspirations realized. The international community must assume its responsibility to see this process to a successful conclusion. No effort and no sacrifice is too big to be made in that regard. We commend and encourage the decision of the Government of Indonesia to invite and cooperate with international efforts under the United Nations to stop the massacres and mayhem and to ensure

that the wishes of the majority of the people of East Timor are unequivocally met.

We in Tanzania believe that no national or global efforts to eradicate poverty can succeed unless and until they address the specific problems related to the poverty of women. We urge the United Nations to continue promoting gender equality issues, including the provision of resources and technical assistance to enhance women's education, health and other projects aimed at their empowerment.

My Government is striving to make sure that women are given opportunity to fully participate in all levels of decision-making and that they get equal access to education and access to credits on a preferential basis. We have also taken measures to protect women, girls and children from sexual harassment and abuse. Tanzania has most stringent legislation on sexual offences that provides for punishment up to life imprisonment. There is also a new Land Law providing for complete gender equality in the ownership, use and disposal of land and which supersedes customary land law. There are also laws to protect the rights of women in marriage, child custody and inheritance, which are being reviewed to address all the concerns of women. Special efforts are also being made to increase the enrolment of girls and women at all levels of education.

These are challenging times, especially for developing countries. Yet, I believe there is a ray hope for building the foundations of a more equitable and dynamic system of international development cooperation through the smart partnership approach of a "win-win" outcome for all players. As we enter the new millennium, I wish to reiterate our firm commitment to cooperating with others in achieving the goals of the United Nations Charter, particularly those relating to the promotion of economic development and prosperity, peace and security and a better world for present and future generations.

As we enter the century of globalization, let all Governments ask the question: Are we globalizing prosperity or are we globalizing poverty? Are we striving for the kind of political correctness that eschews affluence amid poverty or for that which manufactures euphemisms for poverty, pretending it will go away? In a vivid cartoon in 1965, Jules Feiffer portrayed the plight of the poor in these words:

> "I used to think I was poor. Then they told me I wasn't poor; I was needy. Then they told me it was self-defeating to think of myself as needy; I was deprived. Then they told me that underprivileged was overused; I was disadvantaged. I still don't have a dime. But I have a great vocabulary."

That plight of the poor persists equally poignantly to this day. We have spoken much; perhaps too much. The archives of this Organization are bursting with studies and ideas and reviews. Let us strive to do more and talk less in the new century.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United Republic of Tanzania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lacayo (*spoke in Spanish*): Please accept our warmest congratulations, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly. We wish you every success, which we are convinced will be forthcoming in your leadership and in the outcome of these proceedings.

We also wish to convey heartfelt recognition to the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, who so brilliantly presided over the last session, a matter of legitimate pride for Latin America.

I should also like to convey a message of warm support and tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the fruitful work that he has been pursuing with commendable energy and great vision, to reform, strengthen and invigorate the complex and sensitive United Nations system within a comprehensive context while looking towards a new century and a new

millennium that will require all kinds of revisions, adjustments and adaptations.

We share and support the initiatives that, among their other objectives, are designed to make it easier for countries that are relatively underdeveloped and engaged in the tasks of economic and social development and combating poverty to achieve the very difficult and painful transition to a new globalized world with a market economy devoid of barriers, where rapidly developing patterns are being imposed with regard to competitiveness, advanced technology, models of culture and consumption, social and computer communications, sophisticated systems of financing and a vast array of other tools and processes. All of this highlights with stark reality the great differences and imbalances that exist at the international level.

Those are the major challenges that we must confront together, using political will, hard work, education, training, the transfer of science and technology, investment, openness, production, trade, superior skills and active policies of participation to ensure that shared benefits will flow out to profit all, fairly and equitably, at every layer of the social fabric of our peoples.

It would be unfortunate and very dangerous if these great opportunities offered by globalization were not translated into positive, innovative and tangible changes to effectively promote, in the shortest time possible, a substantive improvement in standards of living, expectations and opportunities for the vast majority, within the framework of sustainable development.

On occasions, at certain stages in these transitional processes, disturbances have occurred as a result of troubling inequalities between various sectors and social actors. Such differences exist and are growing both in advanced countries and in developing countries, which are in the majority.

We should anticipate, reverse, mitigate or, at least, temper with realism and sensitivity such negative effects, which owe their origins and characteristics to specific circumstances and considerations that were assumed to be temporary. A failure to take adequate measures could put at risk budding democracies, which are precariously building stability and the institutional structures of law and governance.

In this primordial task, the participation of citizens and of civil society, in its various forms, is vital. We must make use of a constant, open and pluralist dialogue to facilitate changes of course, reform and consensus, which will contribute to the strengthening of democratic systems and make it possible for people to live together in peace.

In this context, this year the two main political forces in Nicaragua, which together won a little more than 90 per cent of the vote in the most recent elections, have produced an agenda that will be submitted to the National Assembly for consideration, so that it can be debated with complete transparency in the nation's principal forum.

Furthermore, beginning in 1997, my country began a difficult reorganization and structural adjustment process, taking the decision to deal responsibly with the high political and social costs of laying down the stable foundations for dynamic national reconstruction and transformation.

We must put behind us once and for all the painful period in our history, which lasted more than a decade and was characterized by destruction and violence in a cycle of fratricidal confrontation and which, fortunately, has now been overcome. That historical interval left us in a very weakened state that was reflected in the deterioration of all human development indicators, the general collapse of economic activities and a gigantic external debt whose unbearable and overwhelming weight was borne on the impoverished shoulders of the long-suffering people of Nicaragua.

This situation of extreme fragility made it necessary, from the beginning of my Government, to formulate an economic policy that would gain the support and credibility of the international community and the multilateral organizations. This led to an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) programme which, after its projected completion within a period of three years, would have made it possible for us to qualify for the concessionary plan of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative.

While we were occupied with the many sacrifices that we had to make during that tough process of healing, reorganization and reconstruction, a little less than a year ago we suffered the ill-timed and devastating effects of Hurricane Mitch, which severely affected our efforts, work and plans. However, generous international cooperation mitigated to some extent the suffering, the irreparable loss of thousands of lives of our compatriots

and the widespread destruction of basic infrastructures, property, natural resources and the environment.

The damage inflicted by the tragedy also created new challenges and opportunities, encouraging us to redouble our efforts and to seek the necessary unity, joining together without distinction, in efforts to move forward. In May this year, therefore, the Consultative Group for the Reconstruction and Transformation of Central America, convened initially by the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington in December 1998 as a result of Hurricane Mitch, met in Stockholm and offered Nicaragua phased global support amounting to $2.5 billion for a period of three to four years. This significant support will enable us to give urgent attention to social programmes and infrastructure projects, with priority being given to the sensitive areas of health, education and housing, as well as to plans for assistance to small producers and agricultural workers affected by Hurricane Mitch.

The disciplined implementation of the ESAF programme and the new set of circumstances ushered in by the hurricane, led last week to an event that happily coincided with the celebration of our national independence — a resolution of the International Monetary Fund by which it associated itself with the resolution previously adopted by the World Bank, thereby opening the door to Nicaragua for its inclusion in the HIPC initiative. This extraordinary event, which will mean a substantial pardoning of our external debt, was a historical watershed, opening up a fresh chapter in our new independence, which will transform the economic and social reality of our people, making it possible for them to enter the new century relieved of an unbearable burden inherited from the past, with renewed vigour, great potential and realistic optimism for a substantially improved quality of life for Nicaraguans.

We should like to reiterate our eternal gratitude to the international community and to the multilateral organizations that have smoothed our path, enabling us to march together, shoulder to shoulder, towards a promising future.

Nicaragua appreciates the sustained efforts of the United Nations system. Those efforts have been expanded during this decade to incorporate the great challenges and main issues confronting the country, including issues concerning governance and local development, the promotion of a healthy environment, the reduction of extreme poverty, greater access by disadvantaged populations to public services, the modernization of democratic institutions, the promotion of population policies, the process of demobilization of ex-combatants and the search for solutions to property conflicts through dialogue. Likewise, we acknowledge the special efforts made by the United Nations with regard to strengthening the administration of justice and the penal system, and to the creation of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. It is also appropriate to emphasize its support for the prevention of natural disasters through overcoming socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities.

Working together with the United Nations, we have gradually been fulfilling the commitments of the Earth Summit of 1992 during my term of office in order to create the National Council on Sustainable Development (CONADES). We have also been making strides concerning the Conventions on Biodiversity and Climate Change, as well as participating in the major projects of the Meso-American Biological Corridor and the Biological Corridor of the Atlantic.

At the same time, we have been making a consistent effort in the demining of the border zone with Honduras, where the last war left more than one 100 thousand anti-personnel landmines in the ground. We thank the international community, and especially the Organization of American States and the United Nations, for the significant resources they placed at our disposal to undertake this delicate task.

As signatory to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, we unreservedly support initiatives aimed at establishing an international mechanism for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We are also conscious of the grave menace to the security of our nations and to peace posed by arms trafficking, including trafficking in small arms, which cause the greatest suffering and loss of human life.

We join in the world crusade to combat poverty, whether that poverty is generalized, focused or in diverse strata of our societies. We are pleased that the last year of this century has been designated the International Year of Older Persons, who seem increasingly to suffer from poverty and neglect. We likewise reaffirm our commitment to ensure social protection, along with the redoubling of efforts to make more effective both the personal security of citizens and the security of their property.

I would not want to end without inviting the Assembly to reflect on the hopes of the 22 million persons who, at the threshold of the twenty-first century,

continue to lack representation at the United Nations — the Organization of universal vocation, where the most important decisions having to do with international policy are taken. The Republic of China — founded in 1912 and which has been an independent sovereign nation that maintains official diplomatic relations with Nicaragua and the other republics of Central America and other countries — continues, lamentably and unjustly, to be unrepresented in the Organization. This prevents it from participating in the work of the Organization and from making its valuable contribution in the various areas of international cooperation, despite the fact that it has complied fully with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, which was signed at San Francisco.

My Government has supported and will continue to support, with firm and fraternal solidarity, the unquestionable right of the Republic of China — whose exercise of full sovereignty over Taiwan for half a century is an unquestionable reality — to be incorporated as a full member of the United Nations. We therefore call anew on the international community not to deny that friendly, progressive and exemplary people the right to be recognized and allowed effective participation in this great forum, thereby affording it the well deserved opportunity of sharing with us its vocation for peace and its generous spirit of international cooperation.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andrés Pastrana Arango, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Andrés Pastrana Arango, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Andrés Pastrana Arango and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pastrana *(spoke in Spanish)*: Allow me, on my own behalf and on behalf of my country, to express our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly for the current session. I am certain that, with a person of your qualities and experience at the helm, the Assembly will achieve the desired results.

I wish to express my congratulations and gratitude to your predecessor, my friend Chancellor Didier Opertti of Uruguay, for his efficient work.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dedication and his contribution to the renewal of the Organization, and to reiterate to him our confidence in his work and his leadership.

This session of the General Assembly is the last one of the twentieth century. In the last hundred years, despite two disastrous global conflagrations, the nations of the world have come to the collective realization that all wars are civil wars, all killing is fratricidal, and that any minor conflict could, by escalating to the nuclear level, spark humankind's final war. It has thus become clear that in order to survive and prosper, nations must be united in a basic agreement on the prevention of war and the protection of human rights, with the preservation of the human race as a first priority.

Today, on the eve of the new millennium, after half a century marked by setbacks as well as by major successes, the United Nations must renew its mandate as a source of social and economic development and as a force for peace.

Here I would prefer to avoid pro forma statements and present instead some concrete and explicit considerations, as we believe that this Organization must be the catalyst of a fair and realistic response to the challenges of our common destiny.

No one could argue with the lofty principles underlying the Charter of the United Nations. Its unquestioned universality is one of the characteristics of the second half of the twentieth century. We agree that respecting the Charter must mean, above all else, applying those principles effectively, without interpreting them in ways that distort the purposes of the Charter.

Our collective experience of over half a century has shown that the proper application of the Charter of the

United Nations is indeed the best and safest way of achieving and consolidating the benefits of world peace. One of the Charter's cherished principles is the obligation of States not to interfere, directly or indirectly, in the affairs of other States, as sovereign equality excludes interference in the internal jurisdiction of other countries. It also implies complying, in good faith, with agreed commitments; observing the principles underlying them; and simultaneously respecting freedoms and human rights. This is a fundamental aspect of international affairs.

The founders of the United Nations — and my grandfather was among them — were not mistaken in their belief that international peace is based on the sovereignty of Member States. Nor were they wrong when, ruling out the unilateral use of threats and force against the integrity and independence of States, they envisaged the use of effective collective means.

Over the past year, we have worked with determination to put an end to the 40-year-old conflict in Colombia. We have reached agreement on an agenda for negotiations between our Government and the Colombia Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), the oldest and largest of the guerrilla groups. But as the world knows, we are negotiating in the midst of conflict, without benefit of a ceasefire, so the killings, kidnappings and attacks by the guerrillas and the "self-defence" groups are still taking a high human, social and economic toll. Achieving peace will require time, patience and optimism in order to successfully overcome the obstacles and doubts inherent in this process.

When I last stood upon this rostrum, one year ago, I outlined a new direction for my country: to work to put an end to the corruption and violence in Colombia. I must admit that the past year has been difficult; the challenges we face are complex. The most important lesson we have learned is that peace is a primary goal for Colombia. Not peace at any price, but a genuine peace that strengthens our democracy, preserves territorial unity and gives every Colombian his or her rightful place in our common destiny.

The quest for peace is not limited to dialogue and negotiation or to putting an end to armed conflict. Achieving peace requires much more than convincing the parties to sit at the negotiating table and reach compromises. It requires rebuilding a society and State in which the causes of conflict have been eradicated, which strengthens the State and helps to create the foundations of a stable and lasting peace.

We Colombians have taken seriously the responsibility of achieving peace. As our recent history makes clear, international support is also necessary for us to face our challenges. Colombia needs financial support from multilateral organizations, from friendly countries and from non-governmental organizations to complement my Administration's efforts. Such support is key for Colombia.

To this end, we have formulated a strategic package for peace, economic prosperity and the strengthening of the State; it is called Plan Colombia. It synthesizes our economic, political and social views and aims to defend Colombia from the threat of drug trafficking, to strengthen our democratic institutions throughout the national territory, and to guarantee the security of our citizens and the full enjoyment of their rights and freedoms. For that reason, we are counting on the solidarity and contributions of the international community.

Given the complexity of the process, it is clear that cooperation for peace must be carried out with the utmost caution. Careless actions can thwart these efforts. That is why we are increasingly concerned by the groundless rumours of alleged military interventions in Colombia, whose supposed purpose is to help my country in the struggle in which it is engaged.

I would like from this rostrum solemnly to state that Colombia, true to the principles that govern our Republic, rejects any foreign interference or intervention in its internal affairs. We Colombians will work to overcome our own challenges. These are times of cooperation, not intervention.

My Government also believes that the peace process is key in winning the fight against the worldwide problem of drugs. That immoral trade, which ruins lives, fuels violence, promotes corruption and destroys our ecosystem, must be opposed by all nations, by all available means. To that end, we must coordinate our efforts regarding production and consumption as well as the numerous links between these two evils.

Over the past two decades, Colombia has been on the front lines of this battle, facing down the drug cartels and their campaigns of intimidation and terror. In the process we have lost many of our finest citizens, to whom we owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude.

But as the major Colombian cartels are wiped out, the illegal drug trade has become a kind of hydra — more spread out, more international and less public, and therefore more difficult to defeat. To vanquish it requires a genuine partnership among the countries that consume and produce illegal drugs, underpinned by the principles of joint responsibility, reciprocity and fairness.

Increased efforts must also be made to confiscate from drug traffickers the money and property they have obtained from that illegal trade. In particular, we must fight the smuggling of industrial products to Colombia, which serves to launder drug money and ends up suffocating Colombia's industries. We must also halt the flow of precursor chemicals needed for the production of narcotics. And multinational corporations that benefit in one way or another should be held accountable for not taking the necessary precautions to prevent their helping and participating in drug trafficking through negligence.

There will be no peace in Colombia as long as the greedy businesses of drug trafficking and the black market in weapons continue supplying irregular groups. We are very concerned about the significant amounts of various types of weapons illegally entering Colombian territory. There is an urgent, inescapable need for all Governments to cooperate to control and halt this unacceptable traffic in death and destruction.

For the last two years, since the first shock wave of the so-called Asian crisis, the economy has been suffering the difficulties of instability and slow-down. This crisis has shown that no State, however powerful, is immune, and that the poor countries have suffered the most from its consequences.

The hypothesis that capital flows would promote accelerated and sustained economic growth has faded in the light of the facts. We have seen the growth of enormous sums of virtual money, whose uncontrolled movements have brought economic turbulence, unemployment, more poverty and even, in some cases, political instability. Latin America has become the most recent victim of the crisis. We must, therefore, give the most serious consideration and priority to the design of a new financial structure. This will be viable and efficient only if it involves increased resources from multilateral financial institutions. It must also involve support mechanisms to lessen the social impact of structural adjustment programmes, especially those affecting the most vulnerable. The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, said so when he spoke about the need to respect essential values to give a human face to the global market.

At the end of the twentieth century, we are moving into an era of powerful changes, accompanied by worrisome tensions. Globalization is deepening, but it coexists with forces that encourage fragmentation. As the peace processes move forward in many regions, new violence explodes in others. Wealth is expanding to unprecedented levels, but alienation and poverty persist. The technological means that promote interdependence and development also support networks of organized crime, drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorism and arms trafficking. New struggles and conflicts have appeared, some using means for which the international community does not seem to be prepared.

Global confrontation is a thing of the past, as are the old plots resulting from strife and spheres of influence. These are times to think in terms of a real community of nations, as competing partners, but mainly as partners that share a common destiny.

There is, nevertheless, a perception that not everything is going well. The world is still not satisfied with itself. There are forces of destabilization and imbalance which put at risk the achievements made to date. Many millions still suffer from malnutrition, illiteracy, disease and exclusion.

We must, therefore, revitalize international cooperation to make the best of globalization, to distribute its benefits more fairly so that development and peace can complement each other efficiently and productively. Revitalizing cooperation is not an option; it is a duty.

After over five decades of existence, the United Nations has partially fulfilled its promise. It has been able to avoid the horrors of a new world holocaust. But the anticipated order, wherein the United Nations would guarantee peace, security and development for all peoples, remains to be built.

After the progress achieved with the Secretary-General's reform proposals, we see with great concern that the pace of change has slowed. Reform must be a continuing process. The United Nations must continue adapting ever more effectively to new conditions and realities. But this cannot simply take a form that is a product of the post-cold-war era. We need a concerted will. From various directions there are calls for the

Security Council to become more effective, to consult the spirit of the Charter and to balance the realities of world power with the just aspirations of those peoples which are least strong.

The system of collective security is one of the cornerstones of multilateralism. It is the rational response to interventionist or isolationist tendencies, the maximum guarantee of the principles to which we all adhere. Colombia reiterates its confidence in these principles of collective security and its commitment to work, decisively, with the different sectors of the international community in order to invigorate the capacity of the Security Council to respond to problems and crises in all regions. That is why my country has submitted its candidature for a seat on the Council for the period 2001-2002.

The time for simple reform intentions is past. With the arrival of the new millennium, the historic moment has come to begin anew real negotiations in the different institutions. We need to find genuinely universal paradigms to ensure that multilateralism leads to the globalization of solidarity. It is necessary to leave behind generalities or fragmented criteria in order to find a comprehensive vision of the United Nations system. A great effort of coordination is required between these institutions and the new international actors, including non-governmental organizations, and the promotion of a real association within a globalized but fairer system. The twentieth century has demonstrated that, alongside the horror and cruelty, there has prevailed what was once considered utopian: the United Nations.

Our paramount commitment must be to the human condition, the ethics and culture of peoples, solidarity and respect for others, regardless of ethnic, ideological, religious or any other considerations. We cannot give in until the day when the freedom and democracy proclaimed in our documents have become a universal reality. When we have liberated the human spirit so that it may fully develop its enormous potential, we will have laid the foundations of a world truly at peace.

Colombia, amidst its difficulties and problems, does not want to be, nor will it be, simply a witness to the changes of these times. Colombia is not a military or economic power. Nonetheless, it is respected by the community of nations for its unlimited and unconditional support for the norms and principles of international law. We offer our contribution — modest, but part of the common effort — to a better future for all mankind.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andrés Pastrana Arango, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio, President of the Portuguese Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Portuguese Republic.

Mr. Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio, President of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of Portuguese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sampaio *(spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation)*: Allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. Your election is a well-deserved tribute to the role that Namibia is playing in the international arena. Your human, professional and intellectual qualities will certainly ensure positive guidance of our work.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the outgoing President, Mr. Didier Opertti, for the dedicated and competent manner in which he conducted the work of the fifty-third session of the Assembly. I reserve a special word of appreciation and esteem for the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the notable way in which he has been fulfilling his difficult task at a moment when so many and such complex challenges face the United Nations and so many hopes are placed on the Organization's capacity to act.

I address the Assembly still under the impact of the wave of emotion, indignation and revulsion that swept over the entire world as a result of the tragedy that befell the people of East Timor after the announcement of the results of the popular consultation on the future of that Territory, which was conducted in an exemplary manner by the United Nations on 30 August.

Anyone who saw the pictures of the Timorese on voting day — clutching their registration cards, waiting in orderly lines for the long-awaited moment to express freely their will — must have reacted with strong emotion and surely perceived, on those faces and in those gestures, the universal appeal of democracy, freedom and justice. The striking contrast between the example of silent courage and civic sense given by the Timorese when massively participating in the ballot and the barbaric acts of revenge that followed clearly reveals what was at stake in this process.

I do not wish to dwell on the history, unfortunately so little known, of the struggle for independence waged by the people of East Timor over the last 24 years. Nor will I recount the procession of horrors they had to suffer and, unfortunately, are still suffering to win their freedom. History teaches us that the birth of a new nation is usually a conquest by its people, achieved as a result of a painful process. The case of East Timor is not an exception. By their courage, determination and willingness to fight and suffer, the people of East Timor have earned the right to become an independent nation. I wish to pay tribute to them, as well as to their leader, Xanana Gusmao, whose human and political qualities have commanded the respect of all who have met him. And on behalf of the Portuguese people, I would like here to bow before the memory of all the Timorese who paid with their lives for the dignity of their people.

The events of the last few weeks in East Timor have rocked the conscience of the international community and force us to reflect on the responsibility of the United Nations, as the representative organ of that community, for the construction of a more just and humane international society. As universal awareness of the inalienable value of the dignity of the human being takes hold at this end of the century, an increasingly heavy responsibility is falling to the members of the international community to articulate principles and interests, in the knowledge that for interests to be legitimate principles must be upheld. That awareness demands, from all those holding public office, prompt and firm responses to moral and juridically unacceptable political behaviour, as well as to the humanitarian tragedies and cycles of regional instability that these provoke.

World public opinion, which takes shape before our eyes as a result of the globalization of the means of communication, expects those answers from us and has trouble understanding why double standards are so often used in situations where identical principles are at stake. We all know that the international community has not always been able to rise to meet these challenges. Suffice it here to recall the tragedy of Rwanda, the cases of the Sudan and Somalia, the delay in reacting to the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, and so many other situations of human suffering that, tragically, were inadequately addressed.

We should therefore pay tribute to the energetic reaction of the international community to the wave of violence and terror that struck East Timor in recent weeks and to the resulting mobilization of a multinational force tasked with guaranteeing the peace and security of that territory, protecting and supporting the United Nations Mission in East Timor and facilitating the humanitarian assistance operations for the people of that territory. Let me offer my thanks to all those who have contributed to this outcome and, in particular, to the countries that have been willing to constitute this force.

In this instance, and beyond the dramatic human aspects, the very credibility of the United Nations was at stake. How could the United Nations, having organized the popular consultation, betray the confidence placed in it by the people of East Timor? Although the reaction was not as prompt as the Timorese deserved and Portugal would have wished, the adoption of Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) shows the world that the Council does not remain indifferent to challenges to its authority, nor does it allow them to go unanswered.

Let this case be not an exception, but rather an example for the future. Swiftness of reaction by the Security Council is a condition of its authority and effectiveness.

Much of what has happened is irreparable and cannot be forgotten. I say this with great bitterness, and may I add that in this as well as in other cases, we cannot encourage a culture of impunity.

Nevertheless, the arrival of the multinational force in East Timor is opening up a horizon of hope, and now we must take care of the living and attempt to save whatever can be saved.

I consider the following to be immediate priorities. First, guaranteeing security in East Timor is the priority task before us so as to ensure respect for the individual rights of the Timorese and to allow them at last to live in peace without the threat of violence and persecution. Without security we will not be able to undertake with all

the necessary vigour and amplitude the urgent tasks of humanitarian assistance to the population of East Timor.

Secondly, we must channel humanitarian aid to East Timor with the utmost urgency, to feed, to treat and to provide shelter to the tens of thousands of displaced people scattered all over the territory; to take care of all those whose belongings have been systematically plundered; to bring comfort to those who have lost members of their families and friends and who helplessly witnessed scenes of horror that will be forever engraved in their memories; to reunite families — in brief, to come to the rescue of a population traumatized by an orgy of violence to which it fell victim.

Thirdly, we must attend to the situation of those Timorese, well over 100,000 of them, who have been deported to Indonesia or have fled the Territory and who are now mostly in West Timor. The continuous access of humanitarian assistance to those populations is urgent and indispensable, including by the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and other institutions for the protection of human rights, to safeguard the life and the dignity of the refugees and to ensure their unimpeded return to East Timor.

Fourthly, we must accelerate the transfer of effective authority in the Territory to the United Nations, as foreseen by the Agreements of 5 May, as a consequence of the result of the popular consultation held on 30 August. Any delay whatsoever would be unacceptable. It is also important to define a timetable for the complete withdrawal, in the shortest possible time, of the Indonesian forces in the Territory. That is the only way to restore peace and stability in the region and to lay the foundations of a healthy relationship between the future State of Timor and Indonesia, a country which we hope will be able to consolidate the democratic promise heralded by its current transition process.

Finally, there needs to be an enormous reconstruction effort in the Territory, which was totally devastated by pillaging, looting and destruction during recent days. To this end, the generous commitment of the international community will be indispensable.

Portugal has expressed its full willingness to contribute to all of these tasks. Owing to the responsibilities it has towards the brotherly people of East Timor and the unconditional solidarity that unites both peoples, Portugal has expressed, from the first hour, its readiness to join the multinational force. To avoid any delay — since every minute counts, in terms of lives and in terms of suffering — we agreed, while ready to participate immediately, to defer our presence in the force to a later stage.

With regard to humanitarian assistance and reconstruction for East Timor, we are doing, and will continue to do, our utmost. I would like here to appeal vigorously to the international community, to the specialized agencies of the United Nations and to the non-governmental organizations to contribute to this effort.

With the Territory under occupation, and the attempt at annexation by Indonesia never recognized by the United Nations, the people of East Timor waited a quarter of a century to exercise the right of self-determination to which they were entitled as the people of a Non-Self-Governing Territory, as prescribed by the United Nations.

Within the framework of resolution 37/30 of 1982, Portugal, as the administering Power of the Territory, Indonesia and the United Nations at last arrived at an Agreement on 5 May.

The popular consultation was agreed upon, with explicit reference, both in the Agreement of 5 May and in Security Council resolution 1236 (1999) of 7 May, to the resolutions of the General Assembly that have represented and continue to represent the Magna Carta of the right of colonial peoples to self-determination: resolutions 1514 (XV), 1541 (XV) and 2625 (XXV).

In spite of all the intimidation, the people of East Timor democratically exercised on 30 August their right to self-determination and chose, by a clear and unequivocal majority, their collective future, thereby acquiring, unconditionally and irrevocably, the right to constitute an independent State at the end of the transitional administration period that the United Nations will soon initiate.

East Timor is reaching freedom with wounds and scars of past suffering; but it is carrying the embryo of hope, and it will now, I sincerely hope, arrive, free of resentment, as a member of the community of States.

(spoke in English)

The question of East Timor is about a people and about fundamentals: human dignity, international law and moral and universal conscience.

In spite of all the terrible events of the past, let us salute, at the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the self-determination of East Timor.

Allow me to end by formulating a vow and a hope: that as soon as possible the General Assembly of the United Nations may hear the free and sovereign voice of Timor Lorosae.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Portuguese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jorge Sampaio, President of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bengali; English text furnished by the delegation*): This year is very special to Bangladesh at the United Nations. It is the twenty-fifth anniversary of Bangladesh's admission to this "Parliament of Man". I bring greetings from the people of Bangladesh.

It is gratifying to us that on this twenty-fifth anniversary, we have you, Sir, presiding over the General Assembly. You are a freedom fighter. You lead a country which was liberated in recent times, and yet, in its short membership in the United Nations, it has contributed so much to the work of the Organization.

We convey our sincere appreciation to Foreign Minister Didier Opertti of Uruguay, our President during the last session, for his excellent work. I would also like to welcome the three new members of the General Assembly: Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga. We sense their joy and excitement, as we experienced 25 years ago.

I convey our sincerest thanks and gratitude to the Secretary-General and to all Member States for their support and assistance in helping us overcome the aftermath of the disastrous floods that hit our country last year. The magnitude of the disaster was unprecedented in our history. The support of the international community was a source of inspiration and encouragement to our people in facing the challenges of rehabilitation and reconstruction.

I stand here today with pride and satisfaction. The Father of our Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, 25 years ago delivered our first address to the General Assembly as head of Government of the sovereign and independent State of Bangladesh. His message on that day expressed the nation's gratitude to the international community for standing by our people in the darkest days of oppression; to apprise the international community of our great struggle for freedom and self-determination; to articulate to the world our faith in democracy, justice, freedom and human rights; and to spell out the basic elements of our foreign policy.

Despite the political upheavals in the country since then, none ventured to alter the foreign policy guidelines laid down by the Father of our Nation. We were thus able to contribute positively to the United Nations by serving in several important commissions and executive bodies in its system and participating actively in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We were privileged to preside over the forty-first session of the General Assembly and to serve one term in a non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman carried the torch of an indomitable people to the United Nations when he stood at this very rostrum before the General Assembly in 1974 and said,

> "The noble ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations are the very ideals for which millions of our people have made the supreme sacrifice. I know that the souls of our martyrs join us in pledging that the Bangalee nation fully commits itself to the building of a world order in which the aspiration of all men

for peace and justice will be realized." *(A/PV.2243, para. 2)*

Twenty-five years later, I am here to renew that pledge. In these 25 years we have seen the partnership between Bangladesh and the United Nations mature. From our early reconstruction needs for national development to steps for empowering people and establishing social justice, the United Nations has been with us. We have also been able to lend support to the strengthening of the Organization and have contributed in its efforts to eradicate poverty and disease, maintain peace and security and support the fulfilment of the rights of the oppressed and the subjugated. We sincerely hope that the development of cooperation between Bangladesh and the United Nations agencies in our country will be expanded and strengthened in future years.

Bangladesh has noted with great concern the recent decline in commitments by donor countries to the United Nations development system, and to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in particular. Bangladesh attaches great value to multilateral assistance as a reliable and trusted source of impartial expertise and urges donor countries to meet the commitments made in the Executive Board of UNDP for the multi-year funding framework, enabling countries such as Bangladesh to plan development programmes accordingly. Recalling the recent statement of the G-8 in Cologne, Bangladesh wishes to note with pride that it is already utilizing over half of the country funds available from UNDP for programmes relating to improving governance, which are helping us to address fundamental constraints to faster development. Now is the time for donors to recognize the commitment we have made and the success we have achieved by increasing resources for these valuable programmes.

Within months of his historic address to this world body in 1974, my father and the Father of our Nation, along with my mother and three brothers, the youngest one being 10 years of age, were brutally assassinated by a group of murderous and misguided military officers on 15 August 1975. Amongst those killed were my uncles, my two sisters-in-law, two cousins and a host of other relatives. My sister and I were the only survivors, as we were out of the country at the time. Coups and counter-coups followed one another at regular intervals, leading to military rule of one sort or another. I was forced to live in exile from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. I began to struggle from exile against the autocratic rule. After coming home in 1991, I stepped up that struggle for the restoration of people's right to vote and their right to freedom and to food. I was harassed and arrested by the authoritarian regimes, and several attempts were made on my life. But nothing could deter me either from my path or from my goal, the restoration of democracy. The movement grew in strength, and finally victory was on the side of the people. Today democracy has taken firm root in Bangladesh for all time to come.

We have strengthened the parliamentary system. Prime Minister's question time has been introduced. The session is televised and broadcast live. To institutionalize democracy and make it sustainable, we have ensured the people's right to vote by introducing the institution of a non-party, caretaker Government to be formed three months before each election. My struggle now is to guarantee the people's right to food; in other words, economic emancipation to a sustainable livelihood. I am driven by a desire to create a just environment, not only for my own people but also for all of humankind.

The creation of the United Nations was aimed at sparing the world from the scourge of another world war and to ensure that human beings are guaranteed their basic rights. During its more than 50 years of existence, it has stood the test of time. National and internationally, we have taken peace and development as two vital and integrally linked objectives. We have taken steps to foster peace regionally. Immediately after it came into office, my Government took the initiative to solve the Ganges water-sharing issue with our neighbour, India. We solved this long outstanding issue successfully in December 1996. I visited India and Pakistan following the nuclear tests in South Asia and urged that we all must do our utmost to deserve peace in our region and devote our limited resources to economic and social development.

An accord was concluded in December 1997 between the Government and representatives of the tribal people living in the south-eastern part of our country without third-party mediation. The accord brought peace after more than two decades to the strife-torn area of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Peace now reigns in the area: the former insurgents surrendered their arms and returned to peaceful lives; all 63,000 refugees from across the border have returned; and there have been no incidents of violence there since the signing of the accord.

We have no illusions that the key to our development and progress is directly linked to investment in our people. Our efforts are now being directed towards transforming our vast human resources into a productive force. Our development programmes are targeted on

rapid poverty alleviation. We have adopted policies to strengthen the socio-economic infrastructure of our country. We have given priority to the various social sectors, including education, health care, poverty alleviation and population growth control, and we have allocated more than 30 per cent of the budget to the social sectors with the objective of poverty alleviation, empowerment and human development. Our programmes include shelter and sustainable livelihood through the *Ashrayon* programme, housing for the poor, health care, education for the poor, microcredit, old-age pensions, income transfers to destitute women and targeted poverty alleviation programmes. This effort towards the economic emancipation of the people is our preoccupation now: we want to build the golden Bengal dreamt of by the father of our nation.

We have adopted specific policies to ensure equality between women and men. We have promulgated laws and set up institutional mechanisms to promote women's rights, to ensure that they have choices and opportunities, that victims are given redress and that stern punishments are meted out to rapists for their deeds. The effectiveness of microcredit in empowering women has been phenomenal. We have also brought women into decision-making at all levels. During the last local Government elections, more than 14,000 women were elected to office.

In our foreign policy, we adhere to the principle of friendship towards all. It is a constitutional requirement to base our international relations on the principles set out in the United Nations Charter.

How do we address the critical issues of the new millennium? We consider peace to be a fundamental human right to be attained, sustained, promoted and carried forward at all times. Without development there can be no peace, and without cooperation, no development. There is no option, then, but to have genuine cooperation between the developed and the developing countries for the eradication of poverty and the fulfilment of the people's aspirations for development.

Bangladesh has been the coordinator of the least developed countries for the last two decades.

We believe strongly that special measures should be taken by the international community to help these countries in their efforts to develop and to participate fully in the global economy. Human rights is the essence of peace. Unless we ensure that citizens live a life of dignity, where their rights are secure, we cannot have a just and peaceful world. This is equally true for communities and nations. In our region, we have nurtured the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which has taken many initiatives to improve the lives of the peoples of the region. At the subregional level, we are cooperating with Bhutan, Nepal and India in the South Asian Development Quadrangle.

The United Nations is the only universal body that deals with all fields of human activity. It has been a catalyst in many initiatives and has bettered the lives of people around the world. In the 1990s the United Nations convened a series of global conferences to address major challenges facing humankind. They addressed problems which were beyond the capacity of individual countries to solve and which called for wide-ranging international cooperation. I believe that the international community should ensure coordinated and integrated follow-up for effective and full implementation of the decisions of those conferences. In Bangladesh, we have taken concrete measures in this regard.

We need to ensure that the United Nations can continue to meet the evolving needs of humankind in the next century. For that, we must have an effective and efficient United Nations. I am happy that Bangladesh has been at the forefront of the adoption of these steps at the United Nations. In this regard, I would like to put on record our great appreciation of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. He has made remarkable achievements in the short time that he has been at the helm of the United Nations. He fully deserves our wholehearted praise and support.

There is no denying the fact that the world needs the United Nations. But we must remember that it is equally true that the United Nations needs the world. All countries must do their best to fulfil their commitments to make the Organization strong and durable. This has been the endeavour of Bangladesh for the last 25 years.

May Bangladesh live forever. Long live the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the statement she has just made.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have the great pleasure of welcoming the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, His Excellency Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Bondevik (Norway): The tragedy in East Timor shows us again that when war and violence erupt the world community turns to the United Nations for the resolution of conflicts and the preservation of peace. We welcome the Security Council's action to endorse the multinational force that is now moving in to bring security and aid to the people of East Timor. Norway will contribute with personnel and financing.

We look to the United Nations for hope and solutions, and for the protection of human dignity and shared values in a world of injustice and conflict. That is why the United Nations is indispensable. And that is why we, the Member States, must make use of the United Nations for peace and development, whether it be in East Timor, in Kosovo or in the Congo. In preparing for the Millennium Assembly, let us together address global challenges in a new spirit, with a new sense of purpose.

I would like to congratulate you, Sir, upon your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. Norway looks forward to working with you. I also warmly welcome the three new Members of the United Nations, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

At the end of this century, globalization presents us with political and moral dilemmas. There has been remarkable progress in technological innovation and in economic and democratic development. But at the same time, while the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer. Poverty and pollution, violent conflict and violations of human rights continue to haunt far too many people around the world. Combatting poverty, preventing conflicts, promoting human rights: these are the main challenges at the top of our common global agenda for the next century. We must ensure that globalization benefits all, not just the few, and we must protect the environment.

To achieve this, we need to strengthen the multilateral system. We must support the United Nations and its work for global peace, security and sustainable development. We must put the United Nations first.

Together we possess the knowledge and the resources needed to eradicate poverty. But still, 1.3 billion people live in extreme poverty. This is unacceptable, morally and politically. It is an injustice and an obstacle to economic and democratic progress. For all Member States, in the North and in the South alike, changing this situation must be our priority. And the United Nations must be the primary instrument. There is no alternative. Let us build a global partnership aimed at eradicating poverty. Let us start by mobilizing the political will and the financial resources needed to meet the target of cutting global poverty in half by the year 2015. It is a matter of political will; it can be done now.

National Governments have the primary responsibility for sustainable development and for meeting social needs. They must promote and protect the rule of law, human rights and democracy. They must fight corruption and pursue sound economic policies. There is no doubt that development assistance is most effective in countries where government is based on the principles of good governance.

The international community must also do more to create economic opportunities for the developing world. The following steps would have a major impact.

First, we need to increase the transfer of official development assistance from the North to the South. Norway has been well above the United Nations target for two decades. We intend to increase our development assistance further, up to 1 per cent of gross domestic product.

Secondly, we need partnerships that enable national Governments to lead the way and determine their own priorities. The private sector and business interests must be brought into the development process, as the Secretary-General has underlined.

Thirdly, development assistance and debt relief must go hand in hand. Creditor nations must now give the poorest members of the world community a new start. Norway's national debt-relief strategy is particularly designed for this purpose. We also support the

momentum created by the Group of Seven States to give highly indebted poor countries substantial debt relief.

Fourthly, the entry of developing countries into the global market must be facilitated, not obstructed. This must be focused on during the new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the World Trade Organization.

In recent years, we have seen an increase in civil wars, often with an additional element of foreign involvement. The root causes can often be linked to ethnic tension, as well as to inequity in the distribution of resources - economic, social, natural and political. During the 1990s, the activities of the United Nations have been more extensive than ever before in the conduct of preventive diplomacy, in the deployment of peacekeeping forces and in the provision of humanitarian aid to the victims of war.

But at the same time, there are critics who claim that the United Nations has failed. Of course, many things could have been done better, but we must not forget the many successes and we must not forget that it is we, the Member States, who are responsible for giving the United Nations the mandates to act and the money and the means to succeed. Let us not make the United Nations a scapegoat for our own shortcomings. Instead, we must make sure that the Security Council can fulfil its primary function in international peace and security. We must act in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law. We must put the United Nations first.

This means enhancing the capacity of the United Nations for conflict prevention, crisis management and long-term development. All Members must meet their financial obligations to our world Organization and its peace operations. Creating common security is not cost-free. In particular, it is the duty of the most powerful members of the United Nations to set an example for others.

The United Nations must develop further its cooperation with regional organizations. As Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Norway has been working to build closer relations with the United Nations system. We need constructive interaction between all international, governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in peacekeeping and post-conflict work in Europe and elsewhere.

Kosovo is a tragic example of the complex conflicts that we have seen in recent years. Building lasting peace there will require the concerted efforts of all actors involved: the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the OSCE, the European Union and others. Our immediate concern is to secure a safe environment for all the people of Kosovo through a credible international presence.

We must promote integration between all the peoples and nations of south-eastern Europe. We must include everyone and isolate no one. This summer, at the Sarajevo Summit, we pledged to make the Stability Pact a key element of our efforts to ensure that democracy, peace and prosperity become firmly rooted all over south-eastern Europe.

At the same time, our efforts to build peace in the Balkans must not be made at the expense of the poorest people elsewhere in the world. They should not pay the bill.

The United Nations and its agencies play a central role in providing emergency aid to victims of war everywhere. Humanitarian assistance should be complemented by efforts to promote reconciliation, democratic development and respect for human rights.

Compliance with international instruments is needed to protect civilians in armed conflicts. We welcome the Secretary-General's report and the Security Council resolution adopted last week. At the forthcoming Red Cross Conference in Geneva, we must generate the momentum needed to secure the protection aspects of international humanitarian law. The early entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court will be a vital contribution to the rule of law.

We must focus on human security, taking individuals and their communities as our point of departure. Combating poverty is crucial to human security.

The proliferation of anti-personnel mines and small arms and the use of child soldiers pose a threat to human security. They inflict deep wounds on society and individuals. Recently, in Russia, we have seen how terrorism strikes innocent people. We strongly condemn such terrorist acts, for which there can be no excuse. International efforts to deal with these serious issues must be intensified.

We must vigorously pursue nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The principles and objectives set out under the process established by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) must be honoured. The early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and ratification of the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II) are crucial priorities. So are START III negotiations to lower nuclear arsenals, and so is a cut-off treaty. These are all crucial elements in a global agenda for sustainable human development.

When natural disasters strike, the poor are the most vulnerable. The recent tragedies in Turkey and Greece affected us deeply. Increasingly, man's pressure on the environment seems to be a contributing factor to natural disasters, which often cause extensive destruction in developing countries. We must step up our efforts to assist developing nations so that they become less vulnerable. In this regard, Norway attaches great importance to the special session of the General Assembly, to be convened next week, on the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Conflict prevention, humanitarian aid and development efforts must go hand in hand. We must deal with the underlying causes of poverty and need, not just the symptoms. Political and economic reform should run in parallel with humanitarian aid. We must close the gap between relief and long-term development. This calls for closer cooperation and the involvement of the whole United Nations family as well as the Bretton Woods institutions. The Secretary-General's reports on Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318 and A/54/133-E/1999/79) clearly demonstrate that poverty, underdevelopment and violent conflicts are closely linked: we cannot address one without addressing the others.

The Secretary-General has pointed to the need for a comprehensive approach and better coordination of conflict prevention and post-conflict peace-building in the United Nations system. The Secretariat has already embarked on the process of implementation and follow-up. Norway fully supports the Secretary-General's initiative and is ready to provide practical and financial support for this important endeavour. We will set aside $3 million for the Secretariat to use for this purpose.

The situation in Africa gives rise to concern. Armed conflicts are hampering development in many countries. AIDS is also taking a heavy toll. There are positive signs too: we are witnessing the growth of democracy, transfers to civilian rule, free elections and economic and political reforms in many African countries. But poverty remains a major challenge.

Norway remains firmly committed to peace and development in Africa. We will work with our African partners for conflict management and development cooperation. We will work with the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, subregional bodies such as the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of West African States, and others, to achieve our common aims.

The Middle East peace process is at a critical juncture. The vision that the parties had in 1993, when the Oslo Accords were signed, is still valid. The fact that Israel and the Palestinians have now embarked on final status talks is a very positive sign. Strong support for the peace process must remain a high priority for the international community. We must work together with the parties to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that will guarantee prosperity and security for all involved.

The world needs an effective multilateral machinery to cope with common challenges. For the next century, we must, first, build a stronger United Nations in the fields of global security and economic and social progress; secondly, use the United Nations as the primary instrument for peace and development, democracy and human rights; and thirdly, tackle poverty and conflict prevention as the main challenges at the top of our agenda. It is up to us, the Member States, to make this possible. Together, we must make it happen.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, His Excellency Mr. Samdech Hun Sen, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Samdech Hun Sen (Cambodia) (*spoke in Khmer; interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is an honour for me to address this Assembly. I bring to all greetings and good wishes from His Majesty Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia, and from the people and the Royal Government of Cambodia. I should like to inform the Assembly about the recent strides Cambodia has made and about how it stands ready to fulfil its role in the community of nations. I wish also to share with the Assembly some humble thoughts on global events of the past and responsibilities for the future.

First of all, on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and on my own behalf, I would like to extend heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. We wish him success in his important work and pledge him our full support and cooperation.

Allow me also to express my sincere thanks and admiration to Mr. Didier Opertti, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, for his benevolent leadership and guidance.

I also wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Royal Government and the people of Cambodia, to warmly welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations.

Just in the past year, Cambodia has finally turned a corner of history, putting firmly behind it the darkness of its recent past and emerging into the new dawn of its future. For the first time in many decades, Cambodia is now a fully integrated country, without rebels or separatists and without internal strife or conflict. The black chapter of strife, violence, turbulence and turmoil is finally closed. Last year we held open and free general elections on our own, assisted and witnessed closely by the international community, which pronounced them fully free and fair. After considerable discussions among the main elected parties concerning a common platform to serve the cause of the country and its people, a new coalition Government is now in place.

The last remnants of the genocidal Khmer Rouge have either surrendered or been captured, and are in custody awaiting trial for their crimes of genocide. We are firmly resolved to do whatever is needed to ensure an open trial for those responsible for genocidal crimes perpetrated in the country in the past. In holding this trial, we will carefully balance the need to provide our people, who were the victims of this genocidal regime, with justice in order finally to put behind us that dark chapter in our national history, and the paramount need for continued national reconciliation and the preservation of the hard-earned peace, national independence and sovereignty which we value most highly.

Peace, which was so elusive for many decades past, now finally prevails throughout the country. Cambodia has joined that important regional group, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and is determined to play its responsible role in regional and international affairs.

Cambodia and its people are committed to pluralist democracy and to upholding and protecting human dignity and human rights. We will be guided and governed to in all our efforts by the pursuit of the rule of law, which provides equality for all before the law and ensures that legal procedures and practices are the same for all and that the law is enforced through a competent and impartial judiciary system with built-in procedures for appeal and for rendering judgment.

On the economic front, we have pursued and will continue to pursue market-oriented policies, with safety nets for the vulnerable sectors of society until they are able to compete on an equal footing with others. Our principal goal is poverty alleviation. Our economic policies and practices, with generous external assistance — for which we are grateful — have resulted in steady growth over the past few years. Even during the financial melt-down in the region two years ago the Cambodian economy maintained a fairly even keel.

Moreover, with strong political will, the Royal Government is implementing its policy platform and reform programmes with a view to establishing a viable foundation for long-term economic growth and sustainable development. The key areas of the reform programmes include military and police demobilization; public sector reform aimed at strengthening democracy; improving public services and increasing their efficiency; enhancing the rule of law and respect for human rights; and economic reforms focused on maintaining macroeconomic stability: strengthening banking and financial institutions, fiscal reform, sound management of

public property and increased public investment in physical and social infrastructure and human resource development.

So now, as the century ends, we can say with confidence that we are firmly back on track as one unified nation — unified in our desire not to be drawn into the divisive factions of the past, but rather to play our part in the comity of nations for a better future for all mankind. We look to the future with great optimism born out of our own achievements in political reconciliation, compromise and adaptation placing the people's longer-term interests above narrow and short-term partisan gains, and out of our sound economic and social policies. We are both determined and confident that Cambodia will march ahead into the next century, and millennium, with renewed confidence and vigour, and that it will contribute to human progress.

This is a historic session which affords us all an opportunity — indeed compels us — to reflect on the past and plan our planet's future together. Looking at a wider perspective, we can see that humanity has witnessed unimaginable and immeasurably great change and progress over the last millennium. Progress in science and technology has helped us conquer deadly diseases, extend and enhance human life and improve the human condition. We have vastly increased our understanding of our planet and our universe. We have annihilated distance and improved communications to make our Earth a global village indeed.

Mr. Jusys (Lithuania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Much of our technological progress and many notable achievements have indeed occurred in the last mere hundred years, and the more we advance, the more possibilities for achievement arise.

Yet our achievements also mask many continued failings and appear to give rise to potential dangers. On a planetary level, we have vastly depleted our natural resources, mining and using non-renewable resources at a rapid rate; destroying our forests; depleting our oceans; polluting resources that are essential to our very survival, such as air and water; and driving to extinction rare species of fauna and flora, the value of whose contributions to balance and harmony in nature we have yet to understand.

We have acquired weapons of awesome power that can destroy all that we have accomplished and built. The technological revolution that we have witnessed in this century has gone so far that human morals have yet to catch up with it. We have deployed vast efforts and resources — intellectual, physical and financial — to achieve this tremendous progress in science and technology, but we must be sure that these accomplishments can be harnessed and will serve only to increase the well-being of humankind instead of destroying it.

The greatest concern of the coming century is that the revolutionary progress in science and technology achieved over the past 100 years has resulted in, among other things, the production of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction. As a result, there are now countless arms factories and a huge stock of modern weapons in many countries worldwide. Meanwhile, the modernization of armed forces — which is actually an arms race — continues unabated, in parallel with the many conflicts that are spreading throughout the world. Where will this situation lead us? This century has witnessed two great wars, unleashed by intolerance and bigotry, which caused more division in their wake. More and more lives are being lost. Social tensions and hatred abound, caused by religious and other differences. The world has reached a stage of complete disorder, where the rich and mighty impose their agenda on the poor and force the weak to follow them.

We must also stress that scientific and technological research, which has been conducted in a morally irresponsible manner, has turned our world into one of drug production, where most of the discoveries have been made by the developed countries but have had a destructive impact on poor developing countries. The world is facing many fundamental challenges, such as organized crime, drug and human trafficking, and so on, that jeopardize the future of coming generations.

In addition, the gap between the rich and the poor, the mighty and the meek, and the haves and have-nots have widened. We have lost the art of sharing and caring. Our numbers have multiplied many times, but science has yet to find ways to feed future billions and to stretch mother earth's capacity to sustain us. The aging of our people will pose immense challenges for future generations, when fewer productive people will have to meet the needs of larger numbers of dependents, young and old alike. Half a billion people live in abject poverty, while a few enjoy conspicuous comfort. The poor, vulnerable and oppressed suffer everywhere because of exploitation and neglect.

In our rapid progress and our daily race to achieve more and temporarily resolve problems as they arise, we seem not to pay attention to the longer-term future. The dawn of the next millennium is forcing us to pause and reflect. In the past, human destiny has from time to time been guided by far-seeing messiahs and visionaries. But we cannot afford to wait for another messiah to appear. Since all our religions teach us that there is a messiah deep down in each one of us, that is where we must search for answers. Let not the arrogance of our justified achievements lull us into inaction for the future.

World leaders have a rare and grave responsibility to carry out this soul-searching. It is given to few of us to undertake the task of charting the future as the next millennium dawns. We have to set aside our daily chores and power games and devote our attention to long-term problems. A few hours or days of reflection in 2000 will determine the destiny of the next thousand years and more for humankind and for mother earth. Let us for a time forget all our differences; imagine that there are no national boundaries or religious, racial or regional differences; and devote our attention to the most important and essential areas we must address in the next four to five years in order to set our planet on the correct course for the future. We do not need long, drawn-out academic conferences of every kind and on every subject to do this. We do not need volumes of position papers. We need only to trust our collective knowledge; the lessons of the past, which are immense; and our innate basic good instincts.

In this spirit, I would like to express Cambodia's strong support for the 2000 millennium summit of the leaders of all countries, where — without having to watch our sound-bites, pose for the cameras or please domestic audiences — we can talk of our planet and humankind and of what needs to be done. The overarching need is to ensure that the Cambodian Buddhist concept of "Dharma", or its equivalent in every religion, be respected, and that we do what past messiahs have enjoined us to do. In essence, we must lead a balanced and tolerant life, in harmony with oneself, with one's neighbours, with other beings, with nature and with the cosmos. Perhaps we have to visualize and devise new institutions and agendas, or significantly reshape and redirect existing ones, to guide us through the beginning of the next millennium.

We also have to set short- to medium-term agendas of a more practical nature. Of topmost priority is the need to eradicate poverty, a continuing scourge and stigma for humanity. We should devise steps to achieve this in the first 10 years of the next century. With sharing from the rich to the poor, internationally and within countries, this is not an impossible task. Already the G-8 nations have agreed to forgo past debts of poorer nations. This trend needs to continue, and future assistance should largely be through well-monitored grants rather than loans.

Secondly, we must preserve and enhance our environment and ecology. We have already seen how some areas try to dispose of their contaminated wastes in other places. It is necessary to stop the generation of wastes or to contain their levels at the source. In some cases we have to slow, or sacrifice current consumption, but this takes vision and determination.

Last but not least, we need to re-evaluate the roles of common institutions and focus on their positive aspects. The United Nations has served us well for more than half a century. It has done commendable work beyond its original mandate and has adapted to changing needs. It has been a platform for defining common goals. But we need to show more dedicated determination to rid it of functions, committees and forums which have lost relevance or usefulness.

Within the United Nations much has been accomplished under the bold and visionary leadership of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and we all pay tribute to his wisdom and managerial abilities. Yet some challenges remain including further efforts to curtail the burgeoning budget levels. Cambodia supports the need to reform the United Nations. The Organization and its specialized organs need to become more unified at the country level under the mechanism of the United Nations resident coordinator. In other words, there should be a single United Nations presence in each country, with specialized organs serving under one leadership, much like an ambassador providing an overall umbrella for all the activities of his country in a host country.

With this reform, our world body will be required to improve the criteria for recruiting staff and officials for posting in various United Nations agencies, especially for posting in member countries. Otherwise, they will consider themselves almighty gods, without any virtue, ready to violate the sovereignty of a member country, which has paid considerable membership dues to pay their high salaries. In this regard, Cambodia has had some experience in the history of its cooperation with some United Nations officials.

The Kingdom of Cambodia deems it necessary, on the other hand, to abide strictly by the United Nations

Charter and to reinforce the role of the Security Council in the process of maintaining peace in the world. We appeal to the international community to make further contributions to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), so that it can continue to provide development aid to the least developed countries.

We also think that punishing poor people of the least developed countries, by imposing sanctions and economic blockade to achieve one's political agenda, goes against the principle of humanity and respect for human rights and for the right to self-determination of the people living in the affected country. Therefore, Cambodia fully supports the demand of many countries for the immediate removal of the economic blockade imposed on Cuba.

Cambodia fully welcomes the decision of the Government of Indonesia to accept the multinational peacekeeping forces of the United Nations so as to restore and strengthen order and stability in East Timor. We cherish the strong hope that the multinational peacekeeping forces of the United Nations will effectively cooperate with the Indonesian Government to quickly and successfully create a peaceful situation for the people of East Timor.

In closing, let me once again appeal to world leaders to use the opportunity of the dawn of the new millennium to carefully evaluate our achievements and their costs, as well as the future perils that confront us, and to consider important steps to establish a new world order that will take this planet safely through the next thousand years. The lessons of the past should steer us towards ensuring lasting legacies for generations yet to be born. Cambodia stands ready to join in this global effort.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra, Mr. Marc Forné Molné, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Forné Molné (Andorra) *(spoke in Catalan; English text provided by the delegation)*: We are coming to the end of 1999, a date that many see as the end of an epoch, given the proximity of the new millennium. The imminence of its arrival invites us to reflect on the history of men and women.

It is with humility that Western nations, such as mine, consider the development of mankind, which well before our year one was recorded by other calendars during thousands and thousands of years, as *homo sapiens* began to create tools of wood and metal, began to bury their dead with dignity or to build empires and cultures ever greater, and also ever more ephemeral. Today we marvel at the mysterious paintings of prehistoric man, such as we find in Andorra and throughout the Pyrenees, or at the great architectural projects of ancient Egypt. Our culture, our crafts, our way of life — all these have certainly changed; but our intellect, though more cultivated and filled with more knowledge, continues to grasp at the problems of our existence in the same way, with the same hesitations — caught between superstition, cruelty and fear on the one hand and optimism and hope on the other.

In short, at the dawn of the year 2000 we remain essentially human and we can still discern in ourselves the traces of our ancestors who were born of natural evolution. However, the progress of human societies has so intensively transformed our environment that our era is intrinsically new and different from those that preceded it. This new world, so recent and so obvious to us that it appears it could not be otherwise, is the world of the new millennium. Globalization defines the spirit of the age. This phenomenon is of such importance that the General Assembly should reflect upon it, each of us according to his unique perspective. The universality of this international forum — where, because of the far-sightedness of its founders, all nations, large and small, have the same voice — makes it the ideal place for a sober reflection on globalization and its effects.

The nineteenth century saw the birth of nationalism, which, in giving cohesion to human communities of all sizes, mythologized its unifying elements, often to an extreme. Andorra is a State, the fruit of a juridical agreement that defined it, long before the coming of

nationalism. Our national essence is not based only on our language, Catalan, which we share with our neighbours to the south and to the north, or on other manifestations of modern nationalism. Institutions are the pillars of our community: a democratic parliamentary system that began in 1419, a culture of peace that has continued uninterrupted since 1278. Perhaps, since the Andorran fatherland is the result of institutional and political ideas worked out in a unique historical experience, born out of a pact, we can emphasize these ideas today in this speech so that here at the United Nations they can serve as unifying institutional elements, thereby promoting the idea that globalization should be shared by all in common progress.

What is important in the new millennium is to know how to orient this globalization with international criteria, so that a son of the Argentine pampas or a daughter of Gabon can equally laugh and cry at the same cartoon, so that their freedom and ambitions can be equal and equally unconstrained. For if their childhoods are no longer so culturally separate, the political and economic opportunities they have when they pass into adulthood should be equally similar.

Globalization is probably the greatest opportunity for humanity, but it will not develop its potential if it is not accompanied by both principles and political action at the highest levels which allow for the establishment of new "post-national" communities with different cultures but with similar characteristics, communities that together can work towards a world of peace and economic progress. This will never be realized without the United Nations, the indispensable Organization. There are no indispensable nations, just as there are not men and women who are better than others because of the accident of their places of birth. What exists today are the indispensable economic and political precepts that our parents, survivors of the Holocaust and other terrors of the Second World War, gave to the United Nations and to the other international organizations allied to it. This Organization, which many love to criticize, while it may be distorted or weakened by the weakness of its Members, is at its core the expression of one of the greatest moments of the soul of humanity.

The political power of the United Nations comes from the defence of the rights of man and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Its power in the economic sphere is based on an ethical cry for development. I spoke before of the children of the pampas or of Gabon, as I might speak of children of the American Midwest or of East Asia or the French Pyrenees or the Arab peninsula. Many of these boys and girls will grow up with the same aspirations, instilled in them by a global culture, but once the age of adulthood is reached the possibilities for the exploitation of their potentials is not the same, and in this great injustice lie the seeds of new wars, exploitations and corruptions. For many of these children globalization has little meaning.

We cannot turn our backs on the fact that 20 per cent of mankind lives in conditions of extreme poverty, and that many millions of others are very close to this state. What does global culture represent for all of these people? Perhaps simply a mirage of all that they might have had and taken pleasure in had they been born citizens of a richer country. The world has today more that 1.5 billion people who lack access to potable water and basic sanitation facilities and who are largely illiterate. What kind of global community will we be creating if these numbers do nothing but rise? The United Nations indicated what needed to take place after the Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995. That conference traced a path that we have begun to follow, but that must now be followed with a firmer step. Why do we not, in the decades to come, try to apply the desires expressed in United Nations policy to economic organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank? We must do this. Otherwise, globalization cannot be any more than it is now: a dictatorship of the financial world over people and their legitimate representatives.

A discussion of the responsibility of those States that administer economic aid returns us to the questions of political rights, the advancement of democracy, the transparency of the political and economic process and the consolidation of the rule of law. Models exist, and if they have been developed in specific nations of the earth, these models do not carry any copyright. Human communities are either free or not; there exists no other possibility. True democracy, the freedom to choose the people to administer the public good through regular elections, is the only form of democracy that can be defended. Today, with the information we have at our fingertips, nobody should dare defend tyranny by resorting to cultural arguments. During the first years of the new century, it will be necessary to keep alive the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so that people everywhere are educated in the social responsibility of the individual and so that democracy is accepted as the only natural form of governance for all regimes.

The recent conflict in East Timor is a good example of the opportunities as well as the dangers that the United Nations has before it. On the one hand, we find ourselves facing a long but productive process, in which a popular vote accepted by all the parties will lead towards an unequivocal resolution of a long-standing problem. On the other hand, once this democratic process was effectively carried out, violence broke out, and now we must react quickly in order to stop the massacre. The United Nations capacity for reaction and the mobilization of the forces of the States that compose it is therefore essential. Here is the third aspect of the United Nations that must become more effective than it is at present. Peacekeeping must be conducted using more powerful and better organized mechanisms of intervention that allow for rapid action and guarantee the effective conversion of words into deeds.

Globalization, a current reality, presents both opportunities and dangers. In order for it to be a tool of progress, it must be accompanied by a system that is both political — involving democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights — and economic — involving the goal of the eradication of poverty and encouragement of development. Support for the system depends on the United Nations having a real capacity for intervention so that peacekeeping is more effective. This was the point of departure for my series of observations. I can guarantee that Andorra, a small State that has been a United Nations Member only since 1993, will make every effort so that the desire to make the United Nations an instrument for positive globalization is not in vain. We are making increasing efforts within the Organization.

Andorra's active participation in the Rome Conference to establish an international criminal court, where it was the second State, after Italy, to sign the Statute, which begins with words written by Andorra well illustrates the efforts of my country to aid and reinforce the rule of law in the world.

I have the pleasure to announce to the Assembly today that once the juridical analysis and translation from Catalan has been completed, my Government will give to the Consell General, our Parliament, a copy of the Statute for ratification. We hope, therefore, shortly to be one of the States that will permit the International Criminal Court (ICC) to become a reality by being one of the first countries to ratify the Statute for its entry into force. Another small European State, San Marino, preceded us towards this goal and we congratulate it on its speed and support for the ICC.

The work of Andorra in the United Nations concerning the rights of man continues to occupy a special place in this fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. In particular, our delegation will follow with interest the work of the Commission on Human Rights during its meetings in Geneva. Andorra's desire to mark its opposition to the death penalty as punishment for a crime will again be expressed. We will also insist on the need to teach human rights to children, as is emphasized in Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We will also work this year on other United Nations Conventions concerning human rights to which Andorra has committed itself to adhere pending internal proceedings.

The year 2001, as a result of the internal rotation of the Western Group, will allow Andorra to be a member of the Economic and Social Council. This represents an important goal for us in our international life, and we are pleased to inform the Assembly that Andorra has started its preparatory work for its presence in this organ, so important to the United Nations. The deliberations of the next session of the Economic and Social Council which will take place in New York in the year 2000. For the session to take place in 2001 in Geneva, where we will participate as full members, the recent extension of our Permanent Mission to the Geneva Headquarters will assure our being able to carefully follow the proceedings. To this end, I have asked our Permanent Representative to establish at this session which of the members of his team, and in what capacity, will be responsible for the Economic and Social Council in 2001 for Andorra. This preparation will ensure that our contribution will measure up to the noble work of the Council, notably in the war against poverty.

Still on the economic plane, Andorra's candidature for the World Trade Organization represents one of the most important current challenges for my country, alongside the relationship we are exploring with our neighbours in the European Union. As a small State which tries to understand its economic opportunities, we find the flows of global commerce, and our participation in them, of particular interest.

In 1998 each Andorran gave around $6 to our annual budget for contributions to the United Nations: this is the per capita figure for the Andorran contribution to the Organization. I am aware that it is not an enormous contribution, but it is much greater than that which each inhabitant of the biggest countries with a high income pays or should pay. A good part of this figure

was for voluntary contributions towards disarmament. An exhibition on children and small arms opened recently. Prepared by the Department of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and sponsored by Andorra, it will move to different sites in the world to raise consciousness concerning the tragedy brought about by the presence of small arms in areas of conflict, especially for the young. We have also made contributions towards programmes designed to collect small arms in some of those countries that suffer from an infestation of this plague. My country intends to continue to contribute to initiatives such as these in order to express our solidarity with the actions for peace of the United Nations. It is right that a small country such as mine, which has been blessed by 721 years of uninterrupted peace should participate in the United Nations in those acts which bring about a culture of peace.

The last time I visited the Headquarters of the United Nations, during May of last year, I did so to present a programme of computerization for the archives of the Group of Western European and Other States to the high-level working group on informatics. I am happy that the diplomatic mission of a small State such as ours can bring about the realization of this project, aided by the National Computer Science Centre of Andorra. The server computers installed at the Mission function at a good rhythm and other regional groups have asked for information in order to establish a similar system. I therefore reiterate the offer I made last year concerning the cooperation of Andorra with any other interested regional groups.

The United Nations is certainly imperfect, but it is the best organization that we have to orient this unpredictable world of the third millennium towards a culture of peace and international solidarity and also along the path of development.

There are many labours left unfinished: the reform of the Security Council, the new tasks of the Trusteeship Council, the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council, the increase in possibilities for peacekeeping operations, among others.

We have a great chance to change this world so transformed by globalization. Do not forget, however, that at the end of this century marked by the worst excesses of humanity, the United Nations represents our charitable spirit and at its centre there is not a machine, but human beings, albeit exceptional ones: the first among them, Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General; Didi Opertti, the outgoing President of the General Assembly, whom we thank with all our hearts for work well done; Theo-Ben Gurirab, the new President, whom we congratulate on his election; and many other persons who bring their individual beliefs to this common house for humanity. It comforts us to think not about systems, but rather about those people who, indefatigable, work for a better world. Let us therefore have the optimism to believe in our species. For I believe that, as the Nobel Prize Winner William Falkner said:

> "man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance."

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, The Honourable Mahendra Pal Chaudhry

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands.

The Honourable Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency the Honourable Mahendra Pal Choudhry, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Choudhry (Fiji): It is my honour today to convey to the Assembly the warm greetings and best wishes of the Government and people of the friendly islands of Fiji.

On their behalf, I congratulate the President on his election. He will be interested to know that his great country, Namibia, is grouped together with my country in the same pool at the Rugby World Cup, which begins in Wales next month. While we are friendly rivals on the

rugby football field, we are absolutely confident here that, with his extensive experience, and impressive credentials, we can all look forward to another successful session of the General Assembly.

We also express our deep appreciation and gratitude to our outstanding Secretary-General and to the members of the Security Council for their wise and able stewardship of the United Nations over the past year.

The priority challenge for the international community continues to be to help ensure that there is freedom and justice and peace and prosperity in every part of our common habitat — the good planet Earth.

I trust that this session of the General Assembly will focus particular attention on specific issues that bear directly on our collective responsibility, as Member States of the United Nations, in promoting peace, security and development to make our good planet Earth a better and safer place for all its citizens.

In this regard, I wish to acknowledge the Government of the Republic of Indonesia for its foresight in giving the people of East Timor the freedom to choose their political future. Now that they have freely made their choice, we in Fiji join other States Members of the United Nations in appealing to the Government of Indonesia to facilitate the peaceful and orderly transition of East Timor to full nationhood and independence.

To enable this, it is crucially important that every effort is made to restore law and order and ensure the provision and maintenance of effective security measures to allow the people of East Timor to return to their homes. The tragic situation which has arisen there, with the loss of hundreds of lives, need not have occurred had the Indonesian Government and the military properly exercised their responsibility to deal decisively with the unlawful armed elements.

As a member of the United Nations family, Fiji stands ready to participate alongside other Member States in the United Nations peacekeeping force in East Timor in laying the foundation for lasting peace in that new nation. Also, we call on the international community to provide tangible assistance to enable East Timor to put an effective Government in place and rebuild its shattered economy.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm Fiji's continuing commitment to United Nations peacekeeping operations in Lebanon, Sinai, Bosnia and Kosovo. Within our own Pacific island region, we remain ready to support and assist Papua New Guinea in bringing permanent peace to Bougainville, as part of a South Pacific Forum regional peace mission. In the Solomon Islands, we are ready and prepared to cooperate with the Government, at the invitation and under the aegis of the Commonwealth of Nations, in restoring peace and promoting goodwill and understanding among the people of this very important neighbouring State. In all this, the guiding principle of Fiji's participation is respect for the sovereign rights of the countries concerned and maintenance of the democratic rights and freedoms of their peoples.

Making sacrifices in serving our common interests is nothing foreign to us in Fiji, for it is through the willingness of the various constituent communities in our multi-ethnic and multicultural society to make sacrifices in order to safeguard our collective future that we have succeeded in constructing an agreed constitutional framework for peace and prosperity in our country. We unanimously adopted a new Constitution in July 1997 to replace the racially weighted Constitution imposed on our people following the military coups of 1987. Under the new Constitution, general elections were held in May this year. In those free and democratic elections, my Government was elected into office with a clear, overwhelming majority. We decisively won the elections because our People's Coalition Party promised policies on development that were focused specifically on addressing the basic needs of the people — the need for regular income through jobs or business opportunity; the need for better education and health services; a safe and clean water supply; electricity; good standard of housing at affordable prices; safe streets and neighbourhoods; and a clean and healthy environment. But above all these was the emphasis we placed on the critical need to bring relief and assistance to the poor, to those on low incomes and to the growing number of those who, through no fault of their own, live in dire poverty.

Unemployment and poverty can be countered effectively only when people have the opportunity, through development, to apply their God-given talents and ability fully. To promote development we need sustained economic growth, but growth that creates employment and opportunities for a wide cross-section of society: growth that creates wealth for only a few and does not reach the masses that live in grinding poverty cannot be regarded as being for the national good. We therefore need to promote economic growth for human development: it must be regarded as the right of every citizen in any society to share in the benefits of growth,

development and progress — benefits not just in the form of material well-being, but also in the improved quality of life through self-fulfilment and the contentment that comes from service to others and love of one's neighbours and fellow citizens.

And so it is with the global community. The promotion of freer international trade for greater growth and prosperity must be pursued with a strong sense of economic and social justice. At international gatherings such as this, we hear high-sounding platitudes and promises of international arrangements that would favour all nations. Such are the kinds of promises about gains from free trade that we hear from the World Trade Organization. In reality, however, opportunities are never the same, let alone equal, given that conditions and circumstances are different, varying from country to country. It is not surprising, therefore, that international agreements genuinely aimed at facilitating freer and increased mutually beneficial international trade have often been undermined and frustrated by unilateral decisions and actions taken to protect vested national economic and political interests.

Globalization and our growing interdependence must be accompanied by a strong and genuine international commitment — especially by those economies that dominate world trade, international finance, technology and industrial production — to consider special arrangements for the developing economies. The specific aim must be to create new opportunities for developing countries to earn higher incomes through their own efforts as participants in the global trading system.

This is why my country, along with others in the Pacific, African and Caribbean regions, are deeply grateful to the European Union for the special trading and other arrangements under the Lomé Convention. For us in Fiji, 300,000 of our total population of 800,000 are dependent for their livelihoods, directly and indirectly, on the sugar industry. But it is the sugar protocol of the Lomé Convention with the European Union which is helping to sustain the continuing viability of this very important industry, while enabling us to attain the internal efficiencies necessary to enhance our international competitiveness.

Similarly, it is the special South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement, or SPARTECA, which Australia and New Zealand maintain with Pacific island nations, that has been a positive factor in increasing Pacific island exports to these two countries. This Agreement has stimulated new industries in the manufacturing sector in our country, has substantially increased our export earnings and has helped create new employment for thousands of our people.

We are, of course, grateful for the development assistance we are receiving from both bilateral and multilateral donors. I recognize in particular our traditional donors such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the United Kingdom, the European Union, the People's Republic of China and many others, along with the various United Nations development agencies. This development assistance has been of immense value both in our economic and in our social development efforts.

While we deeply appreciate all this assistance, we also believe that helping us with increased opportunities in trade and investment is the best form of aid — aid to assist us in achieving higher rates of growth and progress through our own self-reliant capability. We would therefore welcome increased and stronger United Nations support for global policies that contribute specifically to increased foreign capital investment and assistance to developing countries.

We have been very disappointed by what we perceive to be the lack of genuine commitment by the international community, especially by bilateral and multilateral donor agencies and the large developed markets, to respond positively to the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. This Barbados Programme commitment was made five years ago. I very much hope, therefore, that the coming special session on small island developing States will readily agree on a common regime of international support to assist them in their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

In that regard, my Government welcomes the new emphasis by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Asian Development Bank to assist developing economies in the eradication of poverty, in enhancing human-resource development through better education and health facilities and services and in the improvement and expansion of infrastructure to support increased investment in the economy by both foreign and local investors.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate the Kingdom of Tonga, the Republic of Nauru and the Republic of Kiribati on their admission to the United Nations. Their membership will no doubt add strength and resonance to the voice of Pacific Island nations in

this very important international forum. But like them, we in the Republic of the Fiji Islands recognize that, in the ultimate, the United Nations draws its strength from the quality of the commitment of every Member State to its basic purpose and mission, as set out in the United Nations Charter and other related documents.

Article 56 of the Charter reminds us all of our collective responsibility. All Member States are to pledge themselves to take joint and separate actions in cooperation with the United Nations for the achievement of its purposes.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that we are all endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. In my country, the Republic of the Fiji Islands, we have, in our new Constitution, adopted a number of very important fundamental principles as the basis for consolidating peace, unity and stability in our multiethnic and multicultural society. In Fiji we believe in the kind of multiculturalism that recognizes the value and contribution of each community and also that cultural diversity serves to enrich our society. But we temper this by drawing in and uniting all our citizens through focusing on our common needs as human beings.

We believe deeply and sincerely that it is the duty of government — indeed, of every government — to give equal care and attention to the development needs and concerns of all citizens, irrespective of race, religion, gender or economic and social status. These principles and this approach are working for us in Fiji, and I have no doubt that their universal application will also contribute to greater international peace, goodwill and understanding. Indeed, as we direct our attention to the beginning of the new millennium, and in particular the proposed millennium summit of the General Assembly in September of next year, let us look to it both with seriousness of purpose and with a new determination as a unique opportunity to rebuild the foundation for international cooperation.

My delegation fully supports the efforts of our Secretary-General to reform the Organization. The United Nations was established fifty-four years ago. To be meaningful, this reform must include a revision of the United Nations Charter to reflect the realities of today.

On the Security Council, this must include an increase in both the permanent and non-permanent membership, based on a more equitable representation of the different geographical regions. We also urge that the existing regional groupings in the United Nations for the purpose of representation in the various organs and specialized agencies should be reviewed with a view to reconfiguring them. This is, again, to ensure fair and equitable representation of the various geographical regions.

The countries from the South Pacific region, for example, are currently split between the Asian Group and the Western European Group. Australia and New Zealand are part of the Western European Group. On the other hand, Fiji and other island States from the South Pacific are members of the Asian Group. Such a configuration is not only discriminatory on ethnic lines, it is also, in these days, artificial and irrelevant.

I believe, therefore, that it is time Member States from the South Pacific should be allowed to have their own distinctive regional grouping in the United Nations. In proposing this, we are not asking for something that is totally new. In fact, this is already the accepted arrangement in such United Nations agencies as the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

With regard to its development agenda, the United Nations, we believe, must give greater attention to its responsibility, under Article 55 of the United Nations Charter, on the promotion of international cooperation in economic and social development, with particular reference to the needs of developing countries.

The World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen in 1995 agreed on 10 main commitments to be part of an international Programme of Action to enhance social development, including the eradication of poverty in the world through decisive national actions and international cooperation. We look forward to next year's review by the United Nations of this very important Programme of Action. As we begin the new millennium, let it be a challenge to the United Nations to recommit itself to the very important goal of promoting social justice and equity as a top priority in economic development, both within and between nations.

It is incumbent on all of us — the Member States, multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF, and the various United Nations development agencies — to cooperate in taking all appropriate actions to create conditions of stability and well-being, which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations.

As I have said, our membership of the United Nations and our attendance here at this session of the General Assembly reflect our commitment to the United Nations Charter on the maintenance of international peace and security. I urge all Member States to work together to encourage the resolution of disputes and conflicts through dialogue and the pursuit of consensus. And we must do this always with recognition and respect for national sovereignty and independence.

As men and women of goodwill, we have gathered here at the United Nations to reaffirm our common commitment to promoting a more peaceful world. But let us remind ourselves that peace is more than the absence of war or conflict. Peace can be real and enduring only when we all cooperate closely to create conditions for life to be lived in freedom and security, and with justice and dignity.

We must therefore collaborate and cooperate in promoting international trade in goods and services, financial and technology transfers and development that benefits all countries, big and small, developed and developing. And let us act in concert, and with responsibility, in safeguarding and protecting our precious national and global environment.

In concluding, I pray to the Almighty to bless us all, as children of His divine creation, with His wisdom and love, so that we may live together and relate to each other as brothers and sisters, bound together by mutual care and concern for one another.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Mahendra Pal Chandhry, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire and former President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy. I have the pleasure and the honour also to mention that Mr. Amara Essy is the second former President of the General Assembly we will have heard today, the first being Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, who spoke this morning.

Mr. Essy (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I wish to convey to my friend Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab how proud and happy I am to see a son of Africa leading the General Assembly into the new millennium. I congratulate him warmly. I am certain that his experience, gained as the representative of the South-West Africa People's Organization to the United Nations and in the course of a long diplomatic career, will help him resolve the complex issues facing the Assembly at this session. This is an honour for him and for the African continent. I wish also to convey my congratulations to the other officers of the General Assembly. The President may rest assured that my delegation is ready to work with him for the success of the work of the Assembly at this session.

I wish also to convey to the President of the Assembly at its fifty-third session, His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti of Uruguay, our thanks for the quality of the work carried out under his presidency.

I pay heartfelt tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and reaffirm the appreciation of Côte d'Ivoire for the unflagging and able way in which he is fulfilling the mandate entrusted to him.

My delegation welcomes the three new Members of the Organization: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

On the eve of the new millennium, the Organization must adapt to the new shape of international relations in order to increase its effectiveness in all areas, including that of the maintenance of international peace and security. Every passing day reveals the dysfunction of international society. Nearly 10 years after the euphoria born of the end of ideological confrontation, we have yet to put in place machinery for political, economic and financial controls that could lead to the peaceful world evoked by the 1945 Charter.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, we are obliged to say that might continues to prevail over right, that hotbeds of war continue to proliferate, that individual rights are often flouted, and that a large part of mankind has only a remote idea of social progress.

Yet the 1945 Charter remains timely; all that is lacking is the full implementation of the great principles it articulates. The faith of peoples in the United Nations remains intact. This obliges us to make a sustained effort to increase its credibility and strengthen its capacity to meet the challenges it faces.

For a number of years the Organization has been engaged in renewal. Working groups have been established to reform the main structures of the United Nations and adapt them better to the new international context. The Secretary-General himself is involved in this effort, in part by initiating reforms within his areas of responsibility. It is now up to us, the Member States, to work together to complete the process in the months to come.

We hope that the Millennium Summit planned for September 2000 will launch the United Nations into the twenty-first century. It is therefore of great urgency that the plan to enlarge the Security Council be completed. There can be no doubt that by increasing the number of both permanent and non-permanent members, among which Africa will have to have its rightful place, we will also be remedying the lack of political visibility from which the Council has been suffering. The Kosovo crisis revealed the necessity of reaffirming the primacy of the Security Council and hence that of the United Nations.

Confirming the authority of the Security Council must by no means imply a reduced role for the General Assembly. This body, whose representative nature lends it great legitimacy, must be at the heart of the system, with all that this implies for its ability to set the overall course of the United Nations. But such institutional reform can be effective only if all States meet their financial obligations. By reiterating the validity of the principles of the Charter at the dawn of a new millennium, we commit ourselves to guaranteeing international peace and security for succeeding generations.

For the past two years the Organization has been paying particular attention to the conflicts besetting Africa. In his report to the Security Council of 13 April 1998 (S/1998/318), the Secretary-General identified the many causes of these conflicts. He reviewed the ways to promote peace, the most important of which is a development policy that can eradicate the seeds of violence. For their part, African States are making every effort to acquire machinery enabling them to avert conflict situations or, if necessary, to act.

Convinced that war is not inevitable and that the keys to peace are at hand so long as the political will exists, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has unanimously declared the restoration of peace on the continent to be its priority activity for the years to come.

But let us not delude ourselves: that goal will be met only if the international community, as embodied by the United Nations, is mobilized and if it firmly supports Africa's efforts. It is not my intention to disregard all that has been done by friendly countries — the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Japan and Canada, to name but a few — to explore new ways to promote peace and security in Africa and to strengthen Africa's capacity in that regard. Let me recall the establishment in my own country, at Zambakro, of a military training centre specializing in peacekeeping techniques, which is open to all African States.

Nor can I fail to mention the initiatives taken by the United Nations where the scourge of war is at its horrific worst, such as in Sierra Leone, or where it wantonly flays its victims, such as in Guinea-Bissau or in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Ceasefire Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, signed at Lusaka on 10 July 1999, to which all the factions of the Congolese Rally for Democracy have now subscribed, owes a great deal to the perseverance of the Secretary-General and to the persuasive labours of his Special Envoy.

To help our continent escape the spiral of violence, the United Nations has acted at every stage of crises, combining its efforts with those of the OAU and of other regional and subregional organizations.

Based on its success in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the United Nations has experimented in the Central African Republic with a preventive peacekeeping mission, which has thus far been achieving its objectives. The Organization has thus prevented that country from beginning a descent into the hell that the repeated mutinies of 1996 and 1997 seemed to prefigure and the political and social tension that followed. I am particularly pleased to say this because my country has sent a 235-member contingent consisting of a medical unit, an armoured squadron and members of the general staff.

Even though it is more complex in terms of the many issues in its subregion, the work of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is also praiseworthy. It has made it possible to build a momentum for dialogue that will ultimately prevail over the passions and divisiveness that have long been a source of conflict: this is no mean achievement.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes developments in the situation in the Middle East, including recent steps taken by the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Ehud Barak, and by President Yasser Arafat with a view to implementing a just and fair peace that would protect the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and Israel's right to existence within secure and recognized boundaries.

I would be remiss if I did not mention all that has been done to strengthen cooperation in peacekeeping with the OAU, as well as with the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community. We must welcome the fact that the United Nations seems gradually to be overcoming the Somalia syndrome that led it to reduce its commitments.

The prospect of the Organization's soon deploying a peacekeeping force of 20,000 for the implementation of the Lusaka agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is certainly a harbinger of an increased effort of the international community to restore peace and security in Africa. But we should take care that this hope not be dashed, thereby strengthening the feeling, widely held in African public opinion, that our continent is subject to discriminatory treatment as compared with other regions of the world. What was possible in Kosovo should also be possible in Angola, Congo and Sierra Leone. The reference to the values of democracy and human rights that served as a catalyst for the large-scale action in Kosovo is equally applicable to African populations.

I am fully aware of the reluctance of the great Powers to become involved in complex conflicts whose local protagonists are often difficult to identify and tend to compete with one another, at very great humanitarian cost. Certainly, political prerequisites, especially in the form of ceasefire agreements, are necessary for the deployment of peacekeeping forces, but they are not insurmountable when the Security Council makes use of all the resources offered by the Charter.

The breathing of new life into the principle of peacekeeping operations through the provision of credible deterrent elements and resources should not absolve us of reviewing or of clarifying Chapter VIII on cooperation between the United Nations and regional arrangements. Too many uncertainties remain on the scope and modalities of such cooperation and the role that falls to the Security Council in this regard.

The Kosovo crisis and military intervention under the auspices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have only increased our doubts and questions in this connection. The promotion of the regional approach to collective security should in no way serve as a pretext for the Security Council's lack of involvement. By reiterating the validity of the principles of the Charter at the dawn of a new millennium, we commit ourselves to establishing better living conditions for future generations, including all the children of Africa.

Africa, of course, has little weight in world economic statistics, but it does have a potential on which the future of humankind will largely depend. It must participate fully in efforts to build a new world financial architecture. It is also important that, on the eve of major trade negotiations under the aegis of the World Trade Organization, the interests of the developing countries not be sacrificed on the altar of globalization.

I welcome the efforts of the Secretariat to strengthen the resources available for development and to harmonize the activities of various United Nations agencies. It was to that end that a development group was established to bring together the various operational bodies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund. The result has been improved streamlining of activities, more consistent management of aid and simplified procedures for funding projects. This represents progress that we can only welcome by paying a heartfelt tribute to the coordination of the assistance provided by UNDP, particularly by its resident representatives.

But this satisfaction cannot calm the anxiety provoked by the continued decline of official development assistance, which the statistics of the past decade show to be precipitous. Official development assistance has now fallen to below 0.2 per cent of gross national product.

We welcome the initiatives taken last June in Cologne at the summit of the G-8. These attest to a desire to increase assistance to developing countries, especially through significant debt alleviation. The cancellation of part of the debt of the developing countries, against the prospect of the opportunity for these countries to relaunch their investment policies, should allow for harmonization and coordination of the activities of the major international financial institutions. The multilateral framework will also offer the advantage of avoiding direct dealings between a given country and aid providers, which experience has often shown to be a source of misunderstandings that may hamper the smooth

functioning of national economies. However, decisions taken by the richest countries for reducing debt are likely to create disparities among the countries concerned, depending on what category they belong to. The definition of these categories may rely on economic criteria that, by definition, are extremely inflexible.

The question of debt is of grave concern to African countries, which, at the Fourth Extraordinary Summit of the OAU in Syrte, instructed the current OAU Chairman, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa to negotiate with creditors with a view to achieving a total cancellation of African debt. We hope that this mission, led by a head of State, will soon achieve success.

At the dawn of the new millennium, it is urgent that we define a global development assistance strategy and guarantee its financing. We therefore support the convening of a world conference on development financing to set precise objectives and emphasize support for education and social projects without, however, neglecting the industrial and agricultural sectors. I would make a solemn appeal to all donor countries to reverse the current trend and to increase their contributions to the United Nations system in general, and to UNDP in particular, so as to enable them to pursue their activities on behalf of our countries. I would ask these donors to base their actions not on short-term economic interests, but on solidarity.

By reiterating the validity of the principles of the Charter at the dawn of the new millennium, we commit ourselves to restoring dignity to every human being, because nothing is lasting if it is not based on mankind.

I wish here to express my Government's satisfaction with the activities of the United Nations and its two specialized Programmes, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, in our countries. The campaigns against these pandemics, especially that of HIV/AIDS, and endemic diseases, as well as the struggle against narcotics and drugs, are designed to end these two scourges, which directly threaten the individual and upset social stability. At the International Conference on HIV-AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 7 to 11 December 1997, Côte d'Ivoire and France proposed the establishment of a solidarity fund to mobilize the international community. At the suggestion of Côte d'Ivoire, this proposal was taken up by the OAU last June in Ouagadougou.

The actions undertaken by President Henri Konan Bédié, especially to protect and manage forests, develop and manage coastal areas, improve the water supply and adopt a water code demonstrate our concern to preserve human health and to protect the environment.

For several years now and in the context of more sustained economic growth, most African States have opted for political pluralism and the consolidation of the rule of law. These are the counterparts of improved economic and financial management through internationally recognized criteria of good governance. Much remains to be done and the situation varies from one region to another and even from one country to another. But the progress that has been achieved should be taken into account in major international negotiations. In particular, we must never lose sight of the fact that violence is born of poverty. Anything that can help to eradicate the latter is a source of hope to millions of men and women.

An Africa in peace and committed to the path of development is the best guarantee of a better world. This Africa must be united and free of small arms, trafficking and rivalry. It must be united.

An Africa at peace and on the road of development, is the best guarantee for a better world. Such an Africa must be united and free from arms — particularly small arms — trafficking and greed. Above all, it must be united.

During the OAU summit in Algiers, Heads of State and Government proclaimed their faith in the integration of the continent enshrined in instruments such as the Lagos Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Monrovian Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa, the Final Act of Lagos and the Abuja Treaty established by the African Economic Community.

Africa now realizes that time is not on its side; it is faced with rapid globalization, whose effects do not always seem to be in Africa's favour. With this awareness, the fourth special Summit of OAU Heads of State and Government, meeting on 9 September 1999 in Sirte, Libya, decided to create an African Union and a Pan-African Parliament. Next year, another special session will be held, also in Sirte, to adopt the text establishing the Union. For Africa can continue to exist only if the African Union becomes a true Power.

Côte d'Ivoire, keeping faith with this commitment, has started taking action to strengthen the existing subregional integration machinery, within the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Within WAEMU we have already established policies to harmonize tax rates, price statistics, with a regional stock market and transferable securities.

All these actions by Côte d'Ivoire, instigated by President Henri Konan Bédié, have no other purpose than to contribute to internal peace, peace in Africa and peace between Africa and the rest of the world. They are designed to buttress greater solidarity and to seek a more just world, with progress and happiness for each and every one of us.

The millennium summit will afford world leaders an opportunity to reiterate their commitment to the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter, which urges us to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, because the principles set forth in the Charter — dignity, the value of the individual, equality including gender equality and equality between nations — are immutable. They cannot be changed. They are absolute. It is up to us to act, and we must do so, for action is the very essence of politics.

Let us therefore work together to make real these noble objectives of a better future for us all.

The Acting President: I now call on the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, The Right Honourable Robin Cook.

Mr. Cook (United Kingdom): It is just over half a century since the then British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, presented the Charter of the United Nations to our Parliament. He told our Parliament:

> "We are seeking not merely good relations between nations but between the human beings within nations".

The concept he saw expressed in the Charter of the United Nations was revolutionary. That responsibility for the security, freedom and development of people does not belong solely to each State acting individually, but to all nations of the world acting as a united body.

Over the past 50 years, the United Nations has done much to discharge that responsibility. The United Nations and its agencies have led programmes around the world that have released the potential of individual human beings on every continent. We have helped double the literacy rate among women in developing countries. We have helped immunize 80 per cent of the world's children against some of the most lethal diseases. We have established the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the benchmark for freedom for individuals. And this General Assembly played a leading role in insisting on equal democratic rights, regardless of race, and in forcing an end to apartheid. Today the United Nations provides shelter and sanctuary to refugees in every corner of the world.

As we meet this week, United Nations agencies provide homes, food, welfare, health and education to 19 million refugees — more than the population of most Member States. We should take pride in these achievements, because it will help give us the confidence to tackle the challenges that remain.

But we must also be frank about where we have failed. We have failed to deliver peace to many of the peoples of the world. We have not realized the vision of our founders, of nations and peoples within them living in peace with each other. We have averted world war. But we have not averted a world with too much war.

That is why I want to support the excellent opening address by our Secretary-General by focusing my remarks also on what we must do if we are to replace failure to halt war with success in preventing conflict. The harrowing scenes we have witnessed this past year from Kosovo, from Sierra Leone, from East Timor and too many other places underline the urgency of improving our performance in preventing conflicts and also in stopping them once they have started.

I propose five priority areas for action. First, we must tackle the root causes of conflict, starting with the poverty that breeds it. War is becoming a poor man's burden. In the modern world, wealthy nations no longer experience the trauma of conflict on their soil. The soundest basis for peace is prosperity, and the best way we can prevent conflict is by promoting sustainable development. The forthcoming Millennium Assembly must make a reality of the commitment to halving the proportion of people in extreme poverty and reducing the number of nations in heavy debt.

Secondly, we must promote human rights and good governance. Development of a nation will be more rapid where people have the right to develop their full potential. Conflict is more likely where governments rule without the consent of their people.

Thirdly, we must curb the supply of weapons that fuel conflict. For decades, the United Nations, rightly, has focused on halting the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Yet in truth, in those same decades, the weapons that have killed masses in conflicts have been the most common of small arms. In Friday's debate in the Security Council, we will have the opportunity to take forward action to halt the illegal trade in small arms, to promote regional moratoriums on small arms and to limit arsenals of military firearms to legitimate Government agencies.

Fourthly, we must stop the illegal trade in diamonds and other precious commodities which pay for the small arms — and all too often the mercenaries — which sustain conflict. The markets for these commodities, especially the market in diamonds, are small and tightly located in a few centres. We must encourage cooperation with those who manage those markets to cut off the supply of funds to those who are promoting conflict.

Lastly, I strongly endorse the view expressed by our Secretary-General this morning that we must counter the culture of impunity. Those who break international humanitarian law, from Kosovo to East Timor, must know that they will be held to account by the international community.

The international criminal tribunals have shown what can be done. We must build on their work by getting a permanent international criminal court up and running with all speed.

But we will not always succeed in preventing conflict. We need, therefore, to be better equipped to restore peace when war breaks out. As my Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said in Chicago earlier this year, working out the conditions and identifying the circumstances when it is right in the modern world to intervene is the most pressing problem in foreign policy today. His speech demonstrated that Britain is anxious to play its full part in that debate. Our starting point is that our common interest in preserving the world from major conflict is greater than our individual interests as nations.

Globalization is the long and rather ugly term which is used to describe how in today's world we are interdependent with each other rather than independent of each other. We are bound together by our strengthening links in trade and investment, in travel and communication. What happens in one country can have a direct impact on the prosperity and the security — even the climate — of countries on the other side of the world.

And we are also bound together by the consequences of conflict. In Britain 90 per cent of the heroin on the streets of our big cities is grown in Afghanistan under cover of the generation-long conflict in that land. In central Africa, the upheavals of population sparked by the mass genocide in Rwanda have destabilized the region and caught up half a dozen countries in the conflicts that have ensued. Across the countries of Europe there are now several hundred thousands of citizens of the former Yugoslavia who have fled to seek sanctuary from the repeated conflicts there. Just as few nations can stand alone in the modern world, there are now few major conflicts which remain only an internal matter with no impact on the rest of the world.

If we are to respond adequately when conflict breaks out, then the United Nations needs to develop three strengths — credibility, consensus and capacity.

If the United Nations is to have the credibility to press the parties to a conflict to a solution, it must be more representative of the modern world. A small increase in the size of the Security Council would be a modest price to pay for the big increase in its credibility which would come from a more representative permanent membership.

But greater credibility would be pointless without consensus on when the authority of the United Nations should be invoked. Intervention must always be a last resort. We can all agree that the first responsibility for reconciling internal conflict rests with the State in which that conflict arises. But we also have a shared responsibility to act when we are confronted with genocide, mass displacement of people or major breaches of humanitarian law. To know that such atrocities are being committed and not to act against them is to make us complicit in them. And to be passive in the face of such events is to make it more likely that they will be repeated.

Credibility, though, also requires us to demonstrate not just the consensus, but also the capacity, to act. We often hear demands that the United Nations should do something. Let us be honest — the United Nations is nothing more than the aggregate of its Member States. The United Nations cannot do something except when we, its Member States, are prepared to provide the means.

We need to ensure that the United Nations has a sound financial base, which requires all of us to meet our assessed contributions in full, on time. But we must also ensure that when peacekeeping forces are required, they are made available. Britain has signed a standby agreement earmarking forces we are prepared in principle to provide for emergency peacekeeping work. Such agreements enable the United Nations to plan for emergencies with greater confidence that we can rapidly put in the field the right skills, with the necessary equipment. A score of other Member States have signed similar agreements. The more of us that do so, the greater will be the capacity of the United Nations in brokering a basis for peacekeeping deployment.

But in Kosovo we discovered that it was less difficult to put together an armed force to end the military violence than to assemble a United Nations police force to keep civil order. Today, therefore, I can announce that Britain will follow up our standby agreement with the United Nations on troops with a similar agreement increasing the number of United Kingdom police officers available for United Nations troops. This will include a commitment to a rapid response squad, ready for deployment at short notice when it is urgently needed. We shall also be establishing with the United Nations a flagship training course in Britain to train police from around the world to play their part in our joint missions.

I am conscious that the agenda I have set out is an ambitious one. But, in all humility, I have to say that it is less ambitious than the visionary programme set out half a century ago by the founders of the United Nations. As our Secretary-General said earlier this year, unless we can unite around the aim of confronting massive human rights violations, against crimes against humanity, then we will betray the very ideals of our founders.

In the modern world in which we live — the modern world of satellite communications — we know instantly when such violations are taking place. We have the resources and the mobility to move our assets quickly in an emergency. Modern technology has made all of us each other's neighbours. We now need to match that technology with an international doctrine that also reflects the modern world. And it must be founded on the clear principle that the only war we agree to wage is one in which our nations are united in combating conflict.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, His Excellency Mr. Jadranko Prlić.

Mr. Prlić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Allow me at the outset to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Foreign Minister of Namibia, on his election as President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. His talent, skills and experience in international affairs guarantee the wise conduct and direction of this session.

Our gratitude goes to the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti.

Since the beginning of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, my country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, has achieved remarkable progress in implementation of the Dayton/Paris Peace Accords — progress, I might even dare to say, that is encouraging. The progress is visible in the further strengthening of peace, improvements in efficiency and the stabilization not only of common institutions but also of the institutions of both Entities as well as of local government bodies. This progress is also evident in the further promotion and affirmation of democratic values, human rights and freedoms and even in the return of displaced persons and refugees.

This progress has also been noted in numerous reports by authoritative international representatives and institutions from the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the High Representative and participants in the Stability Pact Summit. All of them confirmed that we have been moving in the right direction.

I do not want to suggest that the progress that has been made is spectacular and that we in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the international players involved in my country, are filled with great joy. Nonetheless, despite all the criticism and all of the shortcomings, progress is obvious, and that is a fact worthy of our attention, if for no other reason than that it is proof that Bosnia and Herzegovina is starting slowly and surely to move away from political, humanitarian, economic and almost every other form of stagnation. It is also proof that Bosnia and

Herzegovina is moving away from the state of deep internal mistrust, doubt and reservation which has for a long time existed between the two Entities and different constitutive people, and between their political leaders and representatives in common institutions. It is also a reflection of the state of mind and general mood among the citizens. I believe that it would not be too optimistic to claim that those positive results and developments are evidence of a higher potential and the growing will to find a way out of the difficult and depressing state in which Bosnia and Herzegovina was a prisoner for almost a whole decade.

Of course, there are still many issues which we need to work on regarding the Peace Agreement implementation and the implementation of the conclusions of the Peace Implementation Council contained in the Bonn and Madrid documents, although it also cannot be disputed that, unfortunately, we have reached unbalanced results in the two Entities.

However, this year the common institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been working with greater effectiveness, intensity and coordination. Furthermore, 272,000 displaced persons and 343,000 refugees have returned to both Entities. However, the return remains one of the most difficult and painful humanitarian, economic and political issues, especially the so-called minority return. On different levels, the minority return is still being slowed down, manipulated, blocked and politically exploited. However, we are not accepting the situation. Minority return is not coming off our agenda; rather, it is increasingly becoming an indicator of success, demonstrating the capabilities and responsibilities of many political leaders from the local to the State level. The public at large — the voters — are monitoring and assessing this process daily. The return of refugees under conditions set by us is the barometer of reconciliation, respect for human rights and stability in general.

Reform of the judicial system has also been initiated, and it is aimed at the complete professionalization, modernization and independence of judges and prosecutors, in accordance with the norms and standards of the democratic societies of contemporary Europe and the world. The reconstruction of the Ministry of the Interior is also under way, as well as the modernization, professional training and education of local police. The recruitment of policemen and policewomen reflects the demographic picture of the population. Finally, there has also been progress in cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, although such cooperation is still not complete in the region as a whole.

Starting with the current school year, children in the schools of Bosnia and Herzegovina are attending classes in accordance with new programmes which reflect the present time and look to our common future. The school programmes exclude contents which, according to the common multinational commissions and international representatives, could represent a threat and a danger to the fragile confidence and understanding of the young generations.

Significant results have been achieved through a programme of economic and infrastructural reconstruction. But the restoration of industrial capacity has brought it up to only one third of its pre-war level. We still have a high number of unemployed and socially dependent categories. That is why Bosnia and Herzegovina will need international assistance for a longer period of time. However, that would be an investment not only in our future but in the future of everyone.

Activities are under way in regulating the sensitive but vital field of public information in both Entities. A set of regulations on the organization and functioning of broadcasting is in the process of being drawn up. Significant measures have been undertaken in the sphere of economic reform. In addition, the customs law has entered into force, the reform of the banking system and financial transactions has been launched and the first results have been achieved in the privatization of small enterprises. Preparations for the privatization of larger public enterprises and industrial conglomerates, which were an inheritance from the socialist period, are under way.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is speeding up its activities in these and many other areas as a reflection of its strong orientation towards the building of democracy and civil society, an open market economy and the enlargement of human rights and, by doing so, it is meeting the conditions for admission to the Council of Europe and getting closer to the European Union and trans-Atlantic institutions. Bosnia and Herzegovina has increased its cooperation with the European Union and North Atlantic groupings, at the same time benefiting from the various forms of support and assistance that those institutions have provided to us. In that regard, Bosnia and Herzegovina was particularly encouraged by the adoption last year of the European Union Declaration on special

relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Consultative Task Force established pursuant to that document has intensified its work in assisting us to overcome a number of technical, legal and organizational problems in the relationship between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union. This has strengthened the functioning of State and Entity institutions and is enabling us to cooperate more successfully with the European Union.

For these and many other results which cannot be mentioned because of the time limitations, we have to thank the international community, which gave direct and indirect assistance, and we are especially grateful to the High Representative, who used his right to impose solutions when we in Bosnia and Herzegovina were unable to reach agreement through the normal democratic process. All of those efforts should warn us that the presence of the international community and its role in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still indispensable; it remains a guarantor that life in Bosnia and Herzegovina will move towards normalization. I believe that one of the most convincing pieces of evidence of the progress which we are witnessing in Bosnia and Herzegovina was its organization and hosting of the Summit of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, which took place on 29 and 30 July this year in Sarajevo. As the Assembly may recall, Sarajevo has hosted leaders of the States members of European Union, the Russian Federation, Canada, the United States of America, Japan, the Central and Eastern European countries, the most important multilateral institutions, such as this one, and, of course, the countries of South-Eastern Europe — the very members of the Stability Pact.

At that historic event, the common institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the bodies and organizations from both Entities and many individual actors of all nationalities, confirmed not only their abilities and their capabilities, but also their belief in and readiness to make joint endeavours in their respective and common interests. I am deeply convinced that the numerous offers of congratulations and recognition which were forwarded to us on that occasion from the many prominent European and world heads of State gathered in Sarajevo were more than a simple expression of diplomatic courtesy.

As a unique contribution to the objectives of the Stability Pact, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia have signed the border agreement, thereby removing this sensitive issue from our respective agendas. We are convinced that the Stability Pact and the declaration adopted in Sarajevo have opened new perspectives to Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to all the other countries in the region. This has given birth to a stable and definite solution to a series of catastrophic events of Biblical proportions and the fast recovery of peoples and countries that have paid an extremely high price for ignorance, for political and military adventurism and for flagrant violations of the norms of international relations and international humanitarian law.

The guarantees of the success of the goals of the Stability Pact — peace, prosperity and security for our part of the world — indeed depend upon the determination and preparedness of the European Union, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as other international organizations, institutions and regional initiatives. The guarantee of their accomplishment also depends upon the fact that the European Union and the United States of America have made the Stability Pact a priority in their new trans-Atlantic programme, and the European Union and the Russian Federation have made the Pact the priority in their political dialogue.

Bearing all of this in mind, we in Bosnia and Herzegovina are determined to embrace the Stability Pact in its entirety, to build on it and to accomplish our objectives through concrete contributions to its success, through our own initiatives and creative activities and through the development of regional cooperation within the framework of multilateral and bilateral agreements.

In that context, I wish from this podium once again not only to reaffirm the indispensable role of the Organization in the implementation of the Dayton/Paris Agreement and the Stability Pact, but also to reiterate my gratitude for all the efforts, contributions and many sacrifices made for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have witnessed in this past decade the capabilities and efficiencies of international organizations, and especially of the United Nations. At the same time, unfortunately, we have noticed some weaknesses and imperfections that endanger the role of the Organization as a vital and irreplaceable Organization for the twenty-first century.

I believe that none of us has any doubts that the United Nations is ready and able to pursue its noble mission to continue to strengthen and develop its purpose and ideals in the coming century. Even if the United Nations has not achieved all of its goals, it was able to safeguard global peace, initiate and make possible sustainable development, appease many injustices

worldwide and, on top of all that, to come to very clear visions about its own reforms.

The United Nations started reforming itself several years ago but has not yet finished this task. This path should indeed be vigorously pursued. I am of the view that if the United Nations had the courage to change the world, it can and must find the determination to change itself more quickly and to adapt itself to face the challenges of the next century. The millennium summit could be envisaged as a great opportunity for heads of State and Government of Member States meeting in the year 2000 to verify and adopt a large part of these reforms.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has thus far been to a greater or lesser extent an object of consideration within many international organizations and forums. The time and the context that dictated such a position are fortunately coming to an end. We are now becoming aware of the necessity of taking a more active, creative and responsible role in international relations. That is why we observe with a more critical eye the duties that we have taken on as a full member of the family of nations, but that we have not yet carried out or accomplished fully. Such an orientation is more a result of the fact that we feel more self-confident and are more and more trustful towards our friends and partners in the United Nations and other international organizations, forums and initiatives. An expression of this is the decision taken by Bosnia and Herzegovina to reduce its military expenses by 15 per cent in the hope of giving an example to other nations.

Allow me to conclude this statement by quoting a brilliant diplomat who once said, "People and States act wisely only after they have exhausted all other alternatives."

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.